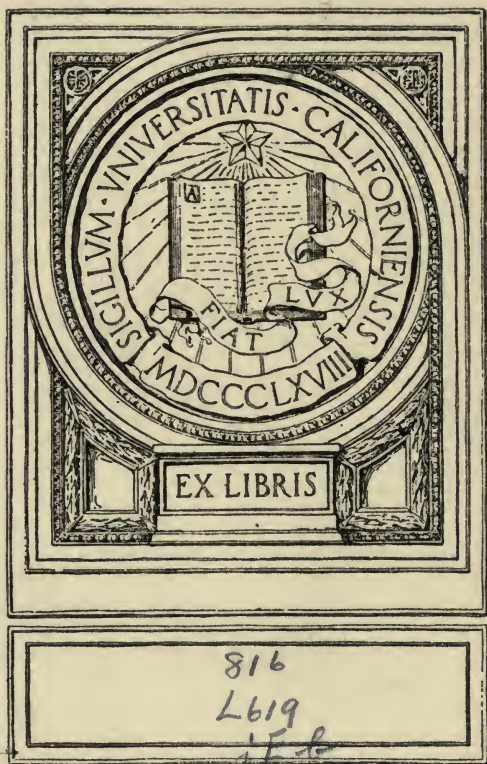


JACQUOU
THE REBEL

•• EUGENE LE ROY ••





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EDITED BY
BARNET J. BEYER



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JACQUOU THE REBEL

(Jacquou le Croquant)

BY

EUGÈNE LE ROY

Translated by

ELEANOR STIMSON BROOKS



NEW YORK

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TO THE
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THE LIBRARY OF FRENCH FICTION

A SERIES OF NOVELS ILLUSTRATING
THE LIFE AND MANNERS
OF FRANCE

INTRODUCTORY NOTE ON THE PURPOSE AND THE SCOPE OF THE SERIES

WE, in America, are only just beginning to learn and to appreciate the spirit and the character of the real France. But this world war has not essentially changed the character of that great people; it has merely brought to the fore a few of the perennial qualities of a noble nation undeservedly condemned by the unthinking elements of the world. It is sad to think that the military defeat of France, when in the throes of revolution, by a Germany that knew no ideal but military force should have inspired the world at large, excluding a handful of intellectuals, to accept the dictum of that country, and neglect and misjudge for half a century a nation that has since the Renaissance been in the van of civilization. Fortunately the tide has turned: we know better now; but France has paid dearly for it: in winning the good opinion of the world she has lost the best of her youth. Had France been the decadent nation that her detractors chose to make her, her spirit would have been shattered

in this war, long before her armies, under the fierce onslaught of the most formidable war machine the world has ever known.

However, this war has disclosed to the world merely the larger and more salient traits of the French people—merely such of the sterner traits as are revealed by battles well fought and sacrifices heroically made. But France is an old nation that has, with greater care than any people since the Athenians, developed distinctive institutions and a unique social and intellectual life. This life is complex, manifold and subtle, and can only be fully grasped by long and close association. For those who cannot live for any length of time in France the nearest approach to a realization of French life and manners must be through her literature, particularly the novel. No other literary form mirrors so accurately and gives so faithful a presentation of the spirit and life of the people as the contemporary French novel. Indeed, through it we can trace the character and the history of the French people; for it is permeated with the ideas and the sentiments representing the distinguishing features of the nation, and undoubtedly conveys the spirit and the traditions of the people far more effectively than expository books or books of travel. The works of Balzac, Flaubert, Maupassant, Zola and Daudet, to mention some of the older novelists, bring us into closer contact with the real France than any historian can possibly hope to do. This is likewise true of present-day France. Nowhere do we get a profounder insight into her soul than in the works of her leading contemporary novelists. Her novelists have given complete and telling expression to French life in all its phases even to the extent of introducing us to the French *foyer*, their

home-life, which is so jealously guarded that none but the most intimate can possibly enter therein.

Her fine traditions, her eighteenth century, and, above all, her great Revolution have made of France the most tolerant of countries. This and the insistent personality of most Frenchmen have caused her to become intensely individualized as a nation. To understand all the delicate nuances of the French character we must go to her contemporary novelists. The novel is so characteristic an expression of the French genius that every doctrine, and we may even say every emotion, has found an exponent in some great writer. Anatole France, for example, is the exponent of radicalism and of ironic thought, Maurice Barrès of nationalism, Paul Bourget of clericalism, Pierre Loti of pure emotion and Octave Mirbeau of down-trodden and suffering humanity. These writers represent, of course, a great deal besides; but the peculiar flavor of their work depends largely upon their individual bias.

The French fiction known to the general novel-reading public in America hitherto has been limited and in the case of contemporary fiction rather misrepresentative. On the other hand, the scope of the present series, THE LIBRARY OF FRENCH FICTION, is extremely broad, including books treating of the life of the various provinces as well as of the life of Paris, books in which all the types of men and women peculiar to France, and in which her manifold social life and manners, are depicted in a masterly fashion.

In general, the French novelist gives us a frank treatment of life, and does not flinch from handling its cruder aspects. But the French novelist, nevertheless, treats his material delicately, and his work is always the honest

product of a mature mind, intended for the mature reader. The treatment of certain hard phases of life or of certain realistic situations does not alarm the reader, as his intelligence prompts him to judge the work by the object the author has set before himself and how near he has come to attaining it.

THE LIBRARY OF FRENCH FICTION is a carefully chosen series of works by the leading modern French writers of all schools. The selection of a novel for the series depended first and foremost upon its artistic merit, but the editor has kept constantly in mind also the effectiveness of its presentation of some interesting phase of the life, manners and character of the French people and the vividness with which it describes the country where our soldiers were lately fighting. The translations are of unusual quality, special attention having been paid not merely to the accuracy of the versions but also to the competence and distinction of the style.

It may perhaps not be out of place here for the editor to express his sincere thanks to M. Baldensperger, Professor at the Sorbonne and Exchange-Professor at Columbia University, to Professor F. W. Chandler of the University of Cincinnati, and to his friend Mr. A. Miller, for valuable help and many suggestions.

BARNET J. BEYER.

NEW YORK,
18 November, 1918.

PREFATORY NOTE

EUGÈNE LE ROY was born in 1836 at Hautefort, on one of the hills of Périgord, the region used as a setting for *Jacquou the Rebel*. On the publication of this novel in 1899, Le Roy was immediately hailed as an excellent story-teller and master of his art. The simplicity and sincerity with which he expresses deep emotion, and his distinctive style won the warm approval not only of the public, but also of his fellow-craftsmen. He was even regarded by some critics as the head of a school of novelists who had determined to tear themselves away from Paris and the life of the metropolis, in order to devote their talent to the life and manners of the provinces, in their opinion, the backbone of France.

Of the five volumes of which Eugène Le Roy's work consists, *Jacquou the Rebel* unquestionably is the most important because of its high literary merit, the sincerity of the author and his finely discriminated characterizations. Written in a pithy and distinguished style, with just some occasional touches of *patois*, which give it local color, the book may be ranked with the best novels dealing with the life of the provinces.

The early part of the author's life was spent in the army. He enlisted in the cavalry, fought against

Austria with the Italians in 1859, and was again a soldier in the unhappy Franco-Prussian war of 1870-1871, where he learned to know the Germans at first hand. Later, he led a quiet, provincial life as a petty government official at Bordeaux, and his uneventful career came to a close in 1907.

B. J. B.

JACQUOU THE REBEL

JACQUOU THE REBEL

CHAPTER I

My earliest memory goes back to 1815, the year when the foreigners entered Paris, and Napoleon, called by the gentlefolk of the Château de l'Herm "the Corsican Ogre," was sent across the sea to Saint Helena. At this time my family were small farmers at Combenègre, the ill-famed estate of the Marquis of Nansac, on the borders of the Forest of Barade, in upper Périgord. It was Christmas Eve. Seated on a small bench in a corner of the hearth I was awaiting the moment of departure for the midnight mass in the chapel of the château, and I thought the time would never come. My mother, who was turning her distaff of hemp before the fire, was with difficulty restraining my impatience by telling me stories. She rose at last, went to the doorstep, looked at the stars and came back at once.

"It's time," she said, "come, my boy; let me arrange the fire for our return."

And having quickly hunted up in the bakehouse the stump of a nut-tree, which had been saved for

this very purpose, she laid it over the fire-dogs and arranged it with fagots and chips.

That done, she wrapped me up in a brown woollen scarf, which she knotted behind my back, pulled my knitted cap over my ears, and slipped some hot ashes into my sabots. Finally, having taken up her hood of fustian, she lighted the lantern, its glass blackened by the smoky oil, blew out the old-fashioned lamp which hung in the chimney, and, once without, bolted the door on the inside with a twisted key, which she then hid in a hole in the wall.

"Your father will find it there, if only he comes back."

The night was overcast, as when it is about to snow, the cold intense, the earth frozen. I tramped along by my mother, who held my hand, urging onward my little seven-year-old legs in her haste to arrive, for she, poor woman, measured her steps by mine.

I had heard our neighbor, Mïon of Puymaigre, say so much about the manger which was arranged each year in the chapel of l'Herin by the young Nansac ladies that I could not wait to see what she had described. Our sabots rang out on the hard path which was only faintly marked on the somber heath and but feebly lighted by the lantern my mother carried. After we had walked a quarter of an hour we found ourselves entering the big stony road called *lou Cami ferrat*, that is, the paved road, which followed the base of the great barren slopes of the Gril-lière hills. Far away on the hill-tops and along the

paths one could see like dancing will-o'-the-wisps the lanterns of those who were going to the midnight mass, or the lights carried by boys who were roving about singing the ancient song of our ancestors the Gaulois, which can be translated thus from the patois:

We have come,
We have come,
To the gate of the lords.
Lady, give us our New Year's gift of mistletoe! . . .
If your daughter is grown
We ask for the gift of mistletoe!
If she is ready to choose a husband,
Lady, we ask for mistletoe!
If we are twenty or thirty,
We ask for the gift of mistletoe!
If we are twenty or thirty, able to take a wife,
Lady, give us the gift of mistletoe! . . .

When we were near Puymaigre, another farm belonging to the château, my mother put her hand to her mouth and shouted loudly:

"Ho, Mion!"

Mion dashed out of her door and answered:

"Wait for me, François."

And a moment after, descending slowly by a bridle-path or a short cut, she joined us.

"So you are bringing Jacquou!" she exclaimed, on seeing me.

"Don't talk to me about it! He wanted to go so badly that it gives him a stomach-ache. And besides, our Martissou is out: I could not leave him all alone."

A little farther on we left the road, which turned into the ancient highway from Limoges to Bergerac, coming from the forest. We followed this road a quarter of an hour until we came to the grand avenue of the Château de l'Herm.

This avenue, sixty feet wide, of which no trace remains to-day, had two rows of great ancient elms on either side. It was paved with big flagstones, while a short grass grew up in the side alleys where it was pleasant to walk in the summer. It climbed in a straight line to the château, planted on the summit of the hill, whose pointed roofs, gables and tall chimneys rose black against the gray sky.

While we were climbing up with others we had met on the way, it began to snow heavily, so that when we reached the top we were quite white; and these floating flakes made the good wives exclaim: "Look at old Father Christmas plucking his geese!" The outer door, reinforced by great nails with pointed heads to protect it, of old, from the blows of axes, was wide open this evening, and gave access to the circular enclosure, bordered by a wide ditch, in the center of which stood the château. This door was pierced through a crenelated wall defended by loopholes which has now been destroyed, and under the arch that led into the inner court a lantern swung, lighting the entrance and the bridge flung over the moat.

At the back of the enclosure of strong walls and to the right of the château shone the lighted windows of

the chapel, which no longer exists. My mother extinguished her lantern and we entered.

What a lot of lights! In the choir of the chapel the old stone altar shaped like a tomb was adorned with them, and they had just finished lighting up the manger, made of greens, in the large embrasure of a window. Having crossed themselves with holy water, the people knelt before the manger and prayed to the infant Jesus, lying in the trough on straw that glittered like gold, between a pensive ox and a shaggy ass who was lifting his head to pull hay out of a little rack. How beautiful it was, a sort of recess or grotto, garnished throughout with moss, box and sweet-smelling branches of fir. In the light softened by the dark greens the Holy Virgin, in a blue robe, was seated by the side of her new-born child, while St. Joseph, standing nearby in a green cloak, seemed to be watching over all with a tender eye.

At a little distance the kneeling shepherds, accompanied by their dogs, their crooks bent into the shape of a cross in their hands, adored the Holy Child, while quite at the back the Three Wise Men with their long beards, guided by the star that shone suspended from the vault of branches, were arriving, bearing gifts.

At all these pretty things, I and the others who were there stared greedily, our eyes wide with astonishment. But we soon had to leave the choir, which was reserved for the gentlefolk, for the bell had rung for mass.

These latter came in all together, as if in proces-

sion. First, the old Marquis, dressed in the ancient style of pre-Revolutionary days, with knee-breeches, white silk stockings, low shoes with golden buckles, a coat in the French mode of brown velvet with buttons of chiseled steel, a waistcoat of brocaded flowers, cut long, and a powdered wig ending in a little queue, wound about with a black ribbon, which fell over the collar of his coat. On his arm was his daughter-in-law, the Countess of Nansac, a stout lady coifed with a sort of shawl twisted about her head and squeezed into a dress of puce-colored silk, the girdle of which came almost up to her arms.

Then came the Count, in an English frock-coat and tight gray trousers with straps, leading his eldest daughter, whose hair was short and curly like a little girl's, although she was quite old enough to be married. After them came a young boy of twelve years, four young ladies of between six and sixteen, and a governess who led the youngest by the hand.

All this company filed past, covertly watched by the timid peasants, and took their places at the praying-desks drawn up in the choir.

The mass began, said by an ancient monk of St. Amand-de-Coly, who had taken up his home in the château, finding the quarters good, and served by the fair-haired young master in pretty, low pumps, pantaloons of pale gray, and a little black velvet jacket over which fell a small embroidered collar.

When the time came for communion, the countrywomen put on their veils and waited. The gentle-

folk did not disturb themselves: as was proper, the chaplain brought them the Holy Image first. All those who were of sufficient age took communion, except the old Marquis, who, because of a serious weakness of digestion, so the château people said, could never fast the necessary length of time. But the old country folk laughed at this, remembering very well that before the Revolution he had believed neither in God nor the Devil, nor in the Adversary, that mysterious being, more powerful and more terrible than the Devil himself.

After the gentlefolk had finished came the turn of the servants, who knelt at the balustrade that enclosed the choir, at their head M. Laborie, the steward, with his hard and, at the same time, crafty face. Then came the good wives, veiled, the peasants, the small farmers of the château, the day laborers, and other countryfolk like ourselves. It was absolutely necessary for all those who were under the authority of the nobility to take communion at the high festivals; that was the rule. In spite of this, my mother did not go up this time; they reproached her roundly for it later. At the end of mass Dom Enjalbert placed his golden stole on the corner of the altar; the gate of the balustrade was opened, and we all entered the choir to pray before the manger. First we sang an ancient carol, intoned by the chaplain, after which each of us said his own prayers. All this kneeling group gazed piously upon the little rosy flaxen-haired Jesus, muttering their prayers, when lo, all at once

he opened his arms, moved his eyes, turned his head, and we heard the faint whimper of a new-born babe . . .

Then from this crowd of superstitious peasants there burst a soft "Oh!" of astonishment and admiration. Certainly most of these good folk believed on the whole that there had been some sort of miracle, and they remained motionless, their eyes wide, waiting hopefully for the miracle to occur again. But that was all. When we came crowding out, everyone was chattering, comparing impressions. Some insisted on the miracle, others were in doubt, but no one was really incredulous. My mother went to light our lantern at the kitchen, the open door of which blazed at the foot of the tower stairway. What a kitchen! On immense fire-dogs of forged iron was burning a great fire of six-foot logs, before which was roasting a fat turkey-cock, stuffed with truffles, which smelled deliciously. On the mantel of the chimney a specially made rack carried half a dozen spits with small skewers arranged according to size. Hanging on boards fastened to the walls saucepans of all sizes shone in the reflection of the hearth, above enormous kettles and basins of the color of pale gold. Molds in red copper or pewter were placed on little tables, and there were other strangely-shaped utensils, whose use we could not guess. On the long heavy table were knives arranged on a napkin according to size, and wrought-iron boxes with compartments for spices. There were two grills there also, one loaded with

puddings, the other with pigs' feet, all ready to be placed on the spit, which a scullery-maid was turning at the side of the chimney. There were also on this table slices of cold meat and patties, pleasant to see in their golden crust.

Having lighted her lantern, my mother thanked those who were there and bade them good-night. But only the two women replied to her. As for the head cook, who was marching up and down giving them orders, proud as a turkey in his white vest and cotton cap, he did not deign to answer.

When we had crossed the bridge, we found Mïon of Puymaigre and the others waiting for us outside the first gate, and after they had lighted their lanterns from ours, we all went on our way.

It was still snowing, "like great handfuls of goose-feathers," to quote the good wives, and the snow in which our sabots plunged was already a foot deep. Whenever anyone reached his road, he left us with a "God be with you!" At Puymaigre Mïon went off and we followed our path alone. That snow made me very tired and, in quite different sorts from the way I felt when we started out, I had to be dragged by the arm.

"You're tired," my mother said; "ride pick-a-back."

She leaned over and I climbed on her back, encircling her neck with my little arms, while she pulled my legs in front of her. As we went on, I questioned her

about everything I had seen, especially about the little Jesus.

"Tell me, is he really alive?"

My mother, who was a poor ignorant peasant, so ignorant that she did not even understand French, but who was a woman of good native sense, made me understand that if he had moved it was by means of some mechanism.

And she still tramped on, slowly, sinking in the soft snow, hoisting me up with a shrug of her hips when I had slipped down a little, and stopping from time to time to knock her snow-clotted sabots against a stone.

A keen wind had risen, whirling about the still heavily falling flakes. The deserted countryside was quite white; the slopes seemed as if covered with a great melancholy shroud, like those placed on the coffins of the dead poor. The tormented branches of the fantastically shaped chestnut trees stood out only as white lines. The bracken, powdered with snow, was bent to the earth, while there were drifts in places on the stouter heather and gorse. A deathly silence lay over the desolate earth and we did not even hear my mother's footsteps, muffled as they were by the thick snow. But as we reached the moor of Grand-Castang a churn-owl flung into the night his disagreeable cry, which made us shiver.

My mother meanwhile was having difficulty following the wretched path, which was lost in the snow. At times she missed her way a little, then, recognizing

it, came back swiftly, guiding herself by a tree, a great clump of gorse, or a pool now covered with ice. As for me, cradled by the motion, I ended by falling asleep on her back, despite the cold, my benumbed arms, for all I could do, unloosing their hold.

"Hold on tight!" she said to me. "In a moment we'll be home."

In spite of this, I was hard put to it to keep awake, when all at once, a hundred steps ahead of us, there burst out a prolonged howling that went through my head like a thousand pins: "Hou! ou . . . ou . . . ou . . ." and I saw a great beast, like a very large dog with pointed ears, roaring, his muzzle in the air.

"Don't be frightened," said my mother.

And giving me the lantern, she took off her sabots, seized one in each hand and marched straight at the beast, knocking them loudly together. I ought not to admit it, but I dearly wished then I were safe beside her in the warm bed. When we were fifty feet from him, the wolf bounded off over the moor; we passed, glancing aside, but we did not see him. A moment later, however, the same sinister howling arose behind us, "Hou . . . ou . . . ou," and this terrified me even more, for it seemed as if the wolf was at our heels. From time to time my mother turned, making a loud noise with her sabots, to frighten the evil beast away; but if this kept the wolf from approaching too closely, it did not prevent him from following us at thirty paces' distance right up to the entrance of our court. Taking the key from

its hiding-place—for my father had not returned—my mother lifted the latch on the inside and quickly closed the door behind us.

Instead of the good fire we expected to find, the stump on the kitchen fire-dogs was quite black, extinguished.

“Ah!” cried my mother; “that’s an evil omen. Some misfortune is coming to us.”

Rummaging in the ashes with a twig, she found a few live coals on which she flung a small bundle of kindling; and this presently burst into flame under the wind from the iron pipe she put in her mouth.

When I was a little warmer and had forgotten my fear of the wolf, I said:

“Mother, I’m hungry.”

“Poor boy! There’s nothing good here!” she exclaimed, thinking of the Christmas Eve feast at the château. But uncovering a pot, she added: “Here’s a meal ball for you.”

While I was eating this corn meal ball, kneaded with water, cooked with cabbage leaves, without even a scrap of lard in it, and quite cold, I was thinking of all those good things which I had glimpsed in the kitchen of the château, and I do not deny that it made the *mique* seem a poor affair, as indeed it was; but ordinarily I did not notice this. Oh, I was not very gluttonous in my thoughts. I did not crave the turkey with truffles, nor the patties, but only one of those beautiful shining black puddings. . . .

Why should there be so many good things up there,

more than were needed; and in our house nothing but poor, cold *miques* left over from the day before? In my childish head the question was not formed very clearly, but all the same it seemed to me that there was something badly arranged about this.

"You must go to bed," said my mother.

She took me on her knees and undressed me with one turn of her hand. Once in bed I fell asleep without thinking of anything more.

When I awoke next morning my mother was stirring up the fire under the pot where the soup was cooking, and my father was sorting on the table the birds he had caught during the night with his flat stick. As soon as I was up I went over to watch him. He had about thirty of them, big and little, thrushes, black-birds, chaffinches, green linnets, goldfinches, tomtits, and even a poor jay. In order to sell them better, my father was putting them together in groups of five or six with a string which he passed through their beaks. When he had finished, he put all these poor little creatures in his haversack and hung it on a nail, out of the way of the cat. Once that was done, my mother, who had already cut the loaf, set the pot boiling and poured the soup on the bread. It was rather early, about eight o'clock, but my father wished to go to Montignac to sell the birds.

Having put the soup tureen on the table, my mother first served my father and me, then herself, and we began to eat heartily, for we were all three hungry,

especially my father, who had spent almost the whole night out of doors. When he had eaten his two big plates of soup and drunk some thin, sour wine, mixed in with the left-over bouillon, my mother removed the plates of brown earthenware, unhooked the earthen pot from the pot-hook, and turned out over the heavy, gray linen cloth some smoking hot chestnuts. They are good, blanched chestnuts, when they are green; when they have passed through the dryer, they are no longer the same. But what is to be done? They have to be eaten dry since there is no way of keeping them always green. We ate them, therefore, just the same, with a few slightly scorched beets from the bottom of the pot, sorting out for the chickens those that were spoiled. When there were no chestnuts left, my father drank a full glass of sour wine, wiped his lips with the back of his hand, and got up.

"You must bring me back a pair of sabots," my mother told him. "I finished mine up frightening off that wicked beast of a wolf."

"I will bring you some, but only if I sell my birds," replied by father, "for otherwise I shall not have a sou."

And picking a small twig from the broom, he fitted it into my mother's old sabot and cut it off at just the right length. That done, he took his haversack, put the measure in it, unhooked his gun from the mantel-piece, and went out, leaving our dog behind him, though the latter wished very much to follow him.

"You'd get lost over there at Montignac," said my father.

I stayed to warm myself in the corner of the fireplace, but not being able to keep still for long, like most small boys, I soon went out on the doorstep. Snow had been falling the whole night through. In our court it lay two feet deep, so that it had been necessary to shovel a path in order to feed the animals in the barn. Further off, over by the forest, the countryside was nothing but a great white plain, strewn here and there with great clumps of gorse, whose dark green still showed at the bottom. On the slopes the grayish houses were smoking softly under their tiled, snow-laden roofs. Over there to my right I made out the Château de l'Herm, its black towers capped with a white wig, like the old Marquis of Nansac. A league before me the heights of Tourtel, their naked trees loaded with hoar-frost, hid the massive belfry of Rouffignac, the bells of which were beginning to toll, calling people to mass. A little to the right, a half hour's journey away, the farm of Puymaigre, its doors tightly shut, seemed to slumber on a flank of the slopes. And high overhead, in the leaden sky, some crows were flying heavily, cawing as they went.

Close to me, along the wall of our court, a robin redbreast was hopping, on a great pile of fagots, seeking a dried bud or a loach, benumbed in a crevice by the cold. Under the shelter of the cart our four hens were roosting quietly. The weather was still severe; a keen north wind drove the powdery snow

across the buried countryside and stung one's face. I came back again quickly to sit down in the corner by the fire.

"Shall we go to mass, mother?" I asked.

"No, little boy, the weather is too bad, and besides we've already been last night."

With nothing to do, I grew very dull. I could not go out. The house, low and dilapidated, was scarcely attractive. It had but one room, and that not over large, which served as a kitchen and a general living-room, as is quite common in all the old farms of our part of the country. Besides, you could hardly see at all in it, for it had but one small window, closed by shutters, without glass, so that when they were shut in bad weather the light only crept in a little above the door and through the low, wide chimney. In addition, the unplastered walls were dirty, and the floor of the loft all blackened by smoke . . . all of which did not help you to see more clearly.

In a corner, touching the chimney, was the big bed of rough carpentry-work, where all three of us slept. And at the foot of the bed, on pegs driven into the wall, there hung a few poor garments. On the opposite side stood a wretched cabinet, all riddled by worms, from which a drawer was missing, and one of whose rotted legs had been replaced by a flat stone. At the back was the kneading-trough, where the lump of bread was kept. Under the trough was a tart-dish for making *millas*, and by its side a sack of wheat and rye, half full, placed on a bit of board to protect

it from the dampness of the earth. At the entrance, close by the door, there stood a miller's ladder which rose to the trap-door of the loft. And under the ladder lay the stack of wood for the day. In another corner was the sink-stone, the hole of which scarcely gave out any heat in such cold weather, and in the middle a wretched table with two benches. From the rafters hung sheaves of maize, a few clusters of string, and that was all. The house had formerly been paved with small stones, but half of them had disappeared, leaving holes where one walked on the beaten earth.

At the time of which I speak I paid scant attention to that, having been born and brought up in hovels like this. But since then it has seemed to me abominable that Christians, as we call them, should have to be lodged like beasts.

But it is still worse when there is a large family and all of them—father, mother, boys and girls, big and little, live in the same room, crowded into two or three beds, four or five together, in sickness and in health. That is neither healthy nor proper. Nor is it right for fathers and mothers to undress before their children, or sisters before their brothers. When the children are older, it is quite impossible for them to avoid seeing things they ought not to see and discover secrets of which they should be ignorant.

But to return: my mother, seeing me quite listless and not knowing what to do, cut some straight little sticks with the pruning knife and gave them to me.

"Here! Make some little ninepins and amuse yourself with them."

I made the ninepins as best I could with her knife and, when I had finished, set them up and began to shoot at them with a round potato for a ball.

Gradually, however, this mournful Christmas day was drawing to a close. About four o'clock my father came back from Montignac. As he came in he shook himself—the snow was still falling and he was quite white—and set his gun in the corner of the hearth. Then he took off his haversack and drew from it a pair of yellow sabots of alderwood, tied together with a stalk of vine. He set them on the ground. My mother slipped her foot into one of the sabots and said:

"They fit me very well. And how much did they cost you?"

"Twelve sous and six liards' worth of nails to tip them. That means I still have eleven sous and two liards. There they are!"

My mother took the sous and went to put them in the drawer of the cabinet. My father then took a *tortillon* from the pocket under his jacket and gave it to me. I kissed him and began to eat this peasants' cake, after offering a piece to my mother, who refused it:

"No, little boy, eat it yourself."

Ah, what a fine cake that was! Since then I have tasted prune tarts, and once even some marchpane,

but never have I eaten anything better than that first cake.

My father watched me with pleasure, quite joyful, poor man, because I was pleased. Then he rose and went to fetch from the drawer of the cabinet an old rusty hammer. Coming back to the fire, he set to work nailing the sabots. When he had finished, he took the straps off the old ones and put them on the new pair, after having adjusted them to fit the foot. Since they were now quite ready, my mother put them on at once, as she had nothing else to wear on her feet.

After that she took down from the pot-hook the big earthen pot in which we cooked the pigs' food. She emptied the potatoes into the tub and crushed them with the hearth shovel. Then she mixed with them a few handfuls of red wheat flour. When she had let our dog eat a little of it, she carried this mash to our pig, which, quite aware of the hour, was complaining loudly, shoving her snout under the door of her sty.

It soon grew dark. The lantern was lit, and when my mother had finished with the pig, she uncovered the pot in which a mess of potatoes was cooking for our supper. She tasted it and added a few grains of salt. Then she put on the table three plates and three slightly rusted iron spoons. There were only two goblets, for the simple reason that we had no more. I drank out of hers. After this she went down into

the little cellar next to the house to draw some wine. When she came back she put the pot on the table.

Meanwhile, my father had returned from the barn where he had been to look after the oxen. He took out of the kneading-trough a great flat loaf made of mixed wheat, rye, barley and grated potatoes. He made a cross on the bottom with the point of his knife and set to work to cut into it. But it was a hard task. This loaf was the last of the batch baked nearly a month before, so it was hard as the devil, a little frozen perhaps, and it squeaked under the knife, which my father had great difficulty in forcing into it. Finally, he succeeded by main strength, but in separating the portions he saw that here and there were spots of green mold.

"What a fine piece of bad luck!" he cried.

They say "wheat a year old, flour a month old, bread a day old." But this proverb did not describe our ways. We always awaited the harvest with impatience, fortunate if we could keep going till then without borrowing some measures of rye or of barleycorn. As for bread, we never ate it fresh, we should have eaten too much of it.

If my father was so much disturbed over a bit of wasted bread, it was because in the old days among the poor they were very sparing of it. For those who lived in great part on chestnuts, potatoes and boiled corn meal, bread, even when quite dark and hard and coarse, was a precious food. Besides, the people remembered the oft-repeated sayings of former days,

and had heard their elders speak of those famines in which the peasants ate the grass along the roads like animals. They themselves felt keenly their good fortune in possessing this life-saving bread. For the peasant, too, there was something sacred about bread obtained with so much effort and trouble; wherefore these incessant exhortations to little boys not to squander it.

My father remained for a time quite out of humor, looking fixedly at the spoiled bread; but what was to be done? So he cut three slices, regretfully taking out the mildewed portion and throwing it to our dog. Then we sat down to supper. There was not much difference between our stew and the pig's mash! They both consisted of potatoes cooked in water, only in our food there was a little rancid fat, of the size of a nut, and some salt.

With such a supper one does not linger at table. We stayed there, however, a long time, for it took good teeth to chew this bread, which was as hard as a stone. As soon as we had finished, my mother led me outside and then put me to bed.

This bad, snowy weather lasted a fortnight, which seemed very long to me. There is nothing pleasant about being shut up for a whole long day in a dark, cold house like ours. In good weather it does well enough. You are out of doors in the sun all day and scarcely enter the house except at night to eat and sleep. So you have not time to be troubled by it. But if I put my nose out of doors in this bad

weather I saw nothing but snow, always snow. No one was in the fields, the men were in the chimney-corners, the animals bedded on straw in the warm stables. This melancholy solitude, this dead landscape, without sound, without movement, made me shiver quite as much as did the cold. It seemed to me that we were separated from the world. And so in truth we were, in this desolate spot, with more than two feet of snow everywhere and at times a heavy fog rising to our very door.

Nevertheless, in the morning when my father had fed the oxen and the sheep, he would take his gun and go out with our dog on the trail of a rabbit. On these days he used to kill five or six of them, for he was a skillful hunter and the dog a good dog. This was fortunate, as we had nothing in our house save the eleven and a half sous brought back on Christmas day. But to sell his game he had to go a long distance and secretly, to Thenon, Bugue, Montignac, with his haversack under his blouse, because of our gentlefolk of Nansac, who were very jealous of their game. These few hares put a little money in the drawer of the cabinet, although they were sold very cheaply. He could not think of selling them in the general market, but offered them to the innkeepers, who made the most of their opportunity, and for a hare weighing six or seven pounds paid about twenty-five sous. During the day, when he happened to be at home, my father made baskets of white osier, yokes for the oxen from the creepers, wooden cages

and other bits of similar handiwork, in order to earn a few pennies. It amused me a little to watch him and to try to weave a basket as he did.

Although our bread was black and very hard, we had finished it even before the snow melted. As the miller of Bramefont could not come to bring us our ground grain, we were not able to bake again. So we were forced to borrow a loaf from Mïon of Puy-maigre, who lent it to us gladly, for she was a good woman if at times she did dust the backs of her boys very hard when they had been naughty.

I might mention in passing that this loaf was never returned to Mïon. Custom demanded that the borrower of bread should not return it himself; it was the lender who should come after it, pretending to have need of it. But Mïon, seeing us later in trouble and misfortune, never came to ask for it.

At last the thaw began. The gray, soaked earth reappeared, and showed the green blades of wheat pricking through the furrows. When the ground had dried a little, my mother took out the sheep, for the leaves we had gathered for the winter had been eaten and our small stock of late hay was almost gone. She took me with her, driving our animals towards the rocky slopes of the Grillières, where there grew a small, fine grass which they greatly liked. It was afternoon. A pale wintry sun mournfully lighted the bare earth. A little wind blew at moments, cold as the snows of the Auvergne mountains over which it had passed. But compared to the weather of the

past fortnight it was a fine day. My mother and I sat down, sheltered from the north by one of those great heaps of stones which we call a "cheyrrou." She was spinning, and I was amusing myself building little houses while our sheep grazed peacefully. About three o'clock, just as I was biting hard on a piece of bread which my mother had brought, our sheep, frightened by a dog, came galloping up, and went past us with a great noise.

As my mother got up to fetch them back, she saw a guard of l'Herm called Mascret, who called out to her to stop. When he had come up to us, he told her, without any form of greeting, to go at once to the château, where the steward wished to speak with her.

"What does he want in such a hurry?" asked my mother.

"That I don't know at all, but he'll tell you, all right." And the guard went off.

We went towards the sheep, which had stopped two hundred feet away, still watching the dog that had frightened them. Driving them before us, we came back to Combenègre. Then my mother set out for l'Herm, after shutting the animals up in the stable.

When she came back at night my father asked her:

"And what did he want with you, that old rogue?"

"Ah, what didn't he! First, he wished to reproach me for not having taken communion Christmas Eve, like the others, and you, too, who were not even at the mass; the ladies were not at all pleased and

charged him to speak of it. After that, he told me that you were still poaching, in consequence of which M. le Comte was no longer able to find any hares near Combenègre, and he warned you to stop or to get rid of our dog. Finally, he added that we must entirely change our conduct, otherwise the gentlefolk would turn us out."

"It wouldn't be hard to find another farm as bad as this!" cried my father. "And he said nothing else to you?"

"Oh, yes. Always the same tale: that he had nothing to do with all this, that he only did as he was told. On the contrary he felt great interest in us, and if I would listen to him everything would be arranged; he would put us on the farm of the Fages, which was good, and in addition he would give you wood to cut in the forest every winter, which would bring you in a little money."

"That's it! And while I was in the woods he would come to Fages now and then to see if the cattle were prospering. . . . And what did you answer him?"

"I said first that, as for the communion, we had not the time to come often to confession, being so far away; that it was all very well for those that had the time, but that for the rest of us it was enough to go to confession once a year. 'And besides,' I added, 'if I listened to you I could not even take communion at Easter, for the priest would not give me absolution.' "

"But, you silly thing, was it necessary to say that to him? Ah, the scoundrel!" cried my father, "if I should ever find him deep in the forest, there between La Granval and the Cros-de-Mortier, he would pass a bad quarter of an hour."

"Do be calm. Some misfortune would happen to us," said my mother. "You know well enough that as to that business there is no danger."

My father did not answer, but fell to watching the fire. At that time I did not understand much of this conversation, and I attributed all my father's anger to the warning not to hunt. I was well aware, because I had often heard it said in our house, that M. Laborie was a hard man, exacting and unjust; that he cheated the poor as much as he could, adding a golden louis or an écu to a farmer's bill, stealing five sous from a miserable day laborer, if he could not do more. And then they always added that he was a great "chenassier," a term whose meaning was unknown to me, and which I thought meant something like "low cur," but that was all. To-day, when I think of this scoundrel, who had completely taken in the Countess of Nansac, pretending to be pious—the hypocrite—and who was a thief, a villain and a "chenassier," as people said, I cannot help thinking that he deserved what happened to him.

About a fortnight after this conversation, while my mother was picking beans for the soup, M. Laborie came to Combenègre. He entered and said, "Good

day, good day," looking at me askance, and asked where my father was.

"He is cutting heather," replied my mother.

"Poaching, you mean," he retorted. "And these cattle, are they thriving?"

Saying which, he went off to the barn. My mother took my hand and we followed him. When he had seen the cattle, M. Laborie drove the sheep out of the stable, and as he watched them, murmured between his teeth, thinking that I did not notice,

"Well, now, don't you want to be reasonable? Come! I will bring you a pretty headkerchief from Perigueux; what do you say?"

As my mother did not answer, M. Laborie, turning and moving about, went off, saying still in the same voice, "You will be sorry for it! You will be sorry for it!"

The second day after, while we were eating our soup, towards the stroke of nine, the dog growled under the table. Suddenly the guard Mascret appeared and halted on the doorstep:

"M. Laborie sends you word, by order of M. le Comte, that you must get rid of your dog at once. If it is found here again, it will be killed."

"May the good God preserve M. le Comte and him who sends you from ordering that!" said my father, clenching his fists and watching Mascret, his eyes full of anger. "You had better have nothing to do with it, or there will be trouble!"

"But if they order me I have to obey," said the guard. "In your place I should sell the dog. M. le Comte says that according to the ancient law a peasant cannot have a hunting dog which is not ham-strung."

"All right," said my father, "only tell them what I said."

There was a moment of silence after Mascret's departure. Then my mother said: "My poor Martissou, the best thing to do is to sell the dog, as the guard says. The notary of Ladouze has asked you for her several times. He will surely give you four or perhaps five écus, since she is good at following the hares."

"I do not want to sell her," replied my father.

"Then take her to your cousin at Cendrieux; he will keep her until we leave here. For we can stay here no longer; something will happen."

"Wife, you are right this time," said my father heavily. "I will take her there next Sunday."

On Saturday, as my father was fastening up the oxen to go after heather, an evil-faced man on horseback came to Combenègre, entered the court and addressed my father.

"Are you Martissou, the croquant, the farmer of M. de Nansac?" he asked.

"I am."

"Then here is a writ of dispossession of the farm." And he held out a paper to my father, who took it, tore it into a thousand pieces, and flung them in the bailiff's face.

"You will pay for that!" said the other, laughing. And he took himself off hastily, for my father had caught up his goad rather brusquely as if he would rather use it on the bailiff than drive his oxen with it.

After he had received this order of dispossession and the dog was at Cendrieux, my mother felt easier in her mind. It would be a matter of several months, but at the festival of St. John we would leave this evil farm where we were perishing of hunger. Above all, we should no longer be exposed to any treachery on the part of that scoundrel Laborie. But when bad luck is on the way it has to arrive. One night we heard a scratching at the door, accompanied by little yelps.

"It's the dog," said my father, going to open the door. "And I expressly told my cousin to shut her up and keep her fastened for several days."

The dog entered, dragging a bit of cord which she had cut with her teeth, and leaped after my father, yelping with delight. My mother did not sleep the rest of the night, worried as she was over this affair, and feeling the approach of some disaster. In the morning, about nine o'clock, we were eating the last of the soup, when all of a sudden the dog ran out barking, and, a second after, we heard the sound of a gun. Several bullets ricocheted against the open door, even into the house. One of them cut my mother in the forehead, which made her cry out. Thereupon my father leaped for his gun, brushing aside my mother who sought to stop him, and ran

out. Before him he saw the dog, lying dead, the blood flowing from her mouth, and at the entrance of the court, Laborie, who was handing to the guard the musket he had just fired.

"Ah, scoundrel! You will bring no more misery on anybody!"

And before anyone could think of saving him, he raised his gun to his shoulder and stretched him out dead.

Before Mascret, pale and himself more dead than alive, quite knew where he was, my mother came out crying loudly,

"Ah, Martissou, what have you done?"

"It's he that will have to tell you," replied my father. "That was bound to happen."

While my mother, with the guard's aid, leaned Laborie against a heap of heather to bring him relief, though it was quite useless, my father went into the house, took his shoes and his great worsted cap, slung his haversack over his shoulder, placed in it a scrap of bread, his powder-horn, his bag of corn, embraced me, went out, gun in hand, and made off towards the forest.

As for me, I went out too, not wishing to be the only one left. I joined my mother, who was looking piteously at that sprawling body. There it was, its eyes fixed, its mouth half-open as if on the point of crying out, the arms stretched out beside the body. It was plain that he had realized he was dying. The guard had opened his waistcoat and unbuttoned his

shirt in order to make sure of it. In the middle of his chest, among the red hairs that bristled there, the shot had almost made a clean hole, and the wound, horrible to see, was bleeding.

Meanwhile, Mascret was running towards l'Herm, spreading the news along the way, so that presently the people began to arrive. The first to come was the husband of Mïon of Puymaigre. He looked tranquilly at the dead man and said:

"I pity Martissou and you others for the consequences; but as for that scoundrel there, I have no pity for him at all. He has got what he deserved a hundred times over."

And all those who came, the peasants from all over the neighborhood, said the same thing, "He's got his deserts!" Or, sometimes, "That's one ruffian the less!" and other remarks of that kind. But soon after, in great state, the Comte de Nansac drew up on horseback, with his head huntsman and Dom Enjalbert who, not being any too good a horseman, was clinging to the saddle. Everybody fell silent. The count looked at the body an instant, then demanded of my mother how it had happened. After she had said that my father had fired at Laborie, mad with rage because he had wounded her and killed the dog, M. de Nansac glanced at the poor beast stretched out in the middle of the court and, bringing his eyes back to his dead steward, said no more. Without doubt, he understood quite well that his brutal order to kill our dog had brought about the man's death, and that the responsi-

bility of that death lay ultimately on him. But from his face one could have told nothing. He looked at the body of Laborie coldly as he would have looked at a wolf brought down by his hounds. At the end of a minute, his people having arrived, he gave orders to place the dead man on a litter, which they had gone for, and everyone went away.

The following day the gendarmes came and questioned my mother about the manner in which the affair had occurred. They filled me with terror, those gendarmes, with their sabers hanging from their yellow belts and their muskets fastened to their saddles. It was the first time I had seen them, and everything, from their heavy boots to their great fringed hats, made them appear to me strangely terrifying. Consequently, as long as they were there—the one on his horse on the bank, interrogating my mother, the other standing, leaning on his saber—I made myself as small as possible in a corner. After she had told him everything, the older one said:

“That’s all very well, but now tell me where your husband is.”

“I don’t know,” replied my mother, “but even if I did know, you may be very sure I shouldn’t tell you.”

“You may have to smart for that! Look out! Come now, has he been back here to-night?”

“No.”

“Nevertheless, we have been positively told that he has.”

“In that case you have been deceived.”

At last, after having pestered my mother as much as they could, pressed her with questions in the hope that she would contradict herself, and having tried in vain to frighten her, the gendarmes went away, to my great satisfaction.

About six o'clock in the evening, a charcoal-burner we knew, who often had his bread and soup with us, came knocking at the door. My mother, dressing quickly, opened to him, after he had made himself known. He told us that my father had sent him to inquire about the visit of the gendarmes. He added that otherwise there was no need to be disturbed about him, for he was lying in an abandoned hut in the thickest part of the wood, in a bottom full of brambles and furze, between La Foucaudie and Lac-Viel, where even the devil could not find him. He only needed his woollen cloak to cover him at night. Having given him the old woollen cloak and half a loaf of bread, my mother charged the charcoal-burner with many affectionate greetings for her husband. Then he set out on his return.

During the afternoon of the following day, the authorities came with the Comte de Nansac and the servants of the château. They placed Mascret and another man on the spot where he had been with Laborie, and another on the spot from which my father had fired. Then they counted the steps and moved about a good deal in the court. After that an evil-visaged old man made my mother relate the manner in which it had all taken place. She repeated

what she had said the evening before to the gendarmes present there with the gentlemen, to the effect that it was in a burst of passion at seeing her wounded and the dog dead, that my father had fired on Laborie.

The old man tried to make her admit more than she actually said, but she knew how to defend herself. When she had finished, he tried to make her confess that for a long time my father had planned this deed. But she protested that it was not so, and stuck to what she had said. Then the old man who was questioning her caught sight of me in a corner, and made a sign to the gendarme,

"Bring me that child."

When I stood before him and he began to question me with a stern air and rough voice, I realized keenly, though I was quite young, that without meaning to I might let slip something that would be of consequence to my father. So, to avoid this, I began to wail and weep. In vain the gendarme spoke to me in French, which I did not understand, and in patois, which he spoke in the dialect of Sarlat, threatened me with prison, and showed me a fifteen-sou piece. Nothing did any good. I answered him only with tears.

Seeing this he rose up angrily, saying,

"That child is an idiot!"

And they went out of the house door and away, all of them. A few days later, we learned that the gendarmes were beating the forest, along with the guards of the château, the head huntsman and the

peasants who had been requisitioned the evening before. But one of these very men sought out Jean, the charcoal-burner, and had my father warned. So, in the middle of the dark night, he went to hide in this man's hayloft, certain that no one would come to look for him there. And sure enough, the gendarmes and all the others returned at night without having found anything but a lot of hares, a fox and two wolves that fled away, greatly astonished at seeing so many men at once.

Two days later, at midnight, my mother heard a gentle scratching at the door, and went to open it. As for me, I slept and awakened only when my father kissed me fervently before leaving. My mother went out with glistening eyes, made the tour of the walls and came back, saying,

"There is no one there."

"Farewell, then, wife," said my father, and, taking his gun, he went away.

This life in the woods lasted several weeks, sometimes in one place, sometimes in another, as my father almost never slept two nights in the same spot or in the same cabin. The men of the lonely houses in the villages about the forest knew him and knew that he was not a villain. Laborie was so much detested in the region that everyone understood how, in a burst of rage, my father had done this deed. No one blamed him for it. Also, although many people must have met him, as they were going very early in the morning to cut a load of wood in the thickets,

or were out hunting at night under a fine, bright moon, no one spoke of it. On the contrary, if he needed to sell a hare, or have something carried to Thenon or Rouffignac, or wanted gunpowder, corn or a pint of wine in his flask, they would do his errand for him. At times, even, some of them would say to him, "Martissou, come and have supper with us, and afterwards you shall sleep in a bed. That will rest you, for you have not been used to a bed for so long." And he would go, knowing that he had to deal with honest people.

He also came to our house, but not often, for he suspected that they were watching more carefully in that quarter. In fact, one morning, two hours before daybreak, four gendarmes surrounded the house, expecting to surprise him. But they got nothing for their night's ride. Hardly a day passed without Mascrot or the other guards coming to prowl about there. But they did not dare to spy around the house after sunset, for they knew it would not be a good thing to meet my father. I am sure they would have much preferred to turn to something else, but the count, who was cold with rage at the knowledge that my father was still at liberty, forced them to it.

My mother, poor woman, was half dead with anxiety, always in mortal terror, scarcely eating and almost never sleeping, so much did she fear that her Martissou would be caught. She said that it must inevitably happen some day, for to hope that ill-luck or sickness or some traitor, perhaps, would never

bring about his capture was simply impossible. And then at night, in her feverish thoughts, she saw the Court of Assizes and the guillotine, and would lie groaning for hours. If she fell asleep from sheer fatigue, she still dreamed of these things, and would go on groaning.

It was nearly a month that my father had been in the woods when the Comte de Nansac sent word by his guards in the villages and about the forest that he would give two golden louis to anyone who would bring about his capture. Since he suspected that Jean the charcoal-burner often saw that "scoundrel Martissou" and helped him to keep alive, he even offered him five.

"Listen, Mascret!" replied Jean to the guard who gave him this message, "I do not know where Martissou is, but even if I did know, not for five or twenty or a hundred louis would I betray him. Tell your master that, and do not come talking to me any more of such a rascally business."

Unfortunately, everybody was not as reliable as Jean, and it is not surprising that among all the good men of the countryside there should be found one rascal. When I say one, that does not mean there were no people thereabouts capable of a bad deed or who had committed one; that would be to refute the saying that the Barade Forest was never without wolves or thieves. But even those who would have robbed on the highways were honest after their own

fashion. To rob a man was permissible, but to betray him for money was not.

But at last the traitor appeared. There was at Maurezies a poor man named Jansou, who had been working for a whole year as a day laborer at the Château de l'Herm. This Jansou had five children, all little, the eldest only nine years old, who lived with their mother in a miserable hovel of a house, leased for two écus a year, while he slept through the week at the barn where he was employed. Usually, he only came to Maurezies on Saturday evenings and went back to work Monday mornings. You can well imagine that with the twelve sous a day that farm-workers earned in those days, he was hard put to it to get bread for his boys, for the rye was dear at that time as well as the barleycorn and rye wheat. Of white wheat there was no use talking, for only in the well-to-do houses was it eaten. For everything else Jansou's boys depended on charity; they were clothed in fragments of old garments, patched all over, in wretched, ragged trousers, which showed their skin through the holes, and were held over the shoulder by a bit of string. Their feet were bare the whole year, and they slept in a corner of the cabin on a wretched mattress stuffed with fern.

By order of the count, it was to this Jansou that the head steward, who for the moment replaced Laborie, addressed himself. At first the poor devil made some objections, saying that he did not know where Martissou was. But when the other threatened not to

give him any more work, and spoke of the two golden louis which he could easily earn by having his oldest boy spy on my father, he agreed.

This boy who, as I have just said, was nine years old, was sharp as a weasel, sly as a fox and evil as a monkey. In addition, he knew the forest as one must who traversed it the whole year long, bird-nesting or looking for whip-handles in the holly bushes, or doing errands for the wood-cutters and charcoal-burners. Several times he had met my father and spied upon him with malicious curiosity, but without being able to discover his regular place of retreat. This was difficult to do, for as I have said, he changed it often.

It was close to carnival time, and, although we usually made merry at this season, my mother watched it approach now in fear, for she well knew that her Martissou would wish to spend it with us and dreaded lest they should take advantage of the occasion to entrap him. So she sent him word by Jean not to come that evening, saying that it would be better to wait until next day. She knew that on Ash Wednesday they would suspect nothing.

Jansou had given his son the cue, and the latter, with the idea that Martissou would want to celebrate the carnival at his own house, had hidden in order to spy on him, that Mardi-Gras evening, in the thicket near the crossroads of l'Homme Mort. Towards night he heard him coming out of the depths of the woods, and was much astonished to see him take the road to La Granval instead of that which led to Combe-

nègre. After following him for a distance, barefooted, making no noise, he saw him enter the house to which he had been invited. It was the home of honest folk, comfortably off, farmers in the family of the curé of Fanlac. The evening before the wife, grieved to think that poor Martissou would not dare to go home and would have to celebrate the carnival in the depths of the forest with only a scrap of bread, had got her husband to make him promise to come to them.

As soon as the door was closed, the boy dashed off to tell his father, who in turn ran to the château to let them know that Martissou was at the house of Le Rey of La Granval. At once a man on horseback set off hurriedly to tell the gendarmes, who left their supper and came in great haste. A hundred steps from La Granval they gave their horses to Jansou, who waited for them. Very quietly, with the assistance of the guards from l'Herm, they surrounded the house. It was about eleven o'clock at night. All those present had feasted well, and were singing and clinking their glasses of mulled wine when two gendarmes pushed the door open brusquely and entered.

You can imagine the amazement. Everyone cried out; my father ran for his gun which he had placed in a corner. He found, however, that it had been carried off and placed on a bed; a little boy had wanted to play with it. So he sprang towards the window, straddled it, in spite of the two gendarmes who tried

to seize him, and fell into the hands of two others who were guarding the window. In no time his hands were tied behind his back, while Le Rey's wife wept and lamented, crying in a piteous voice:

"Oh, my poor Martissou! I am the cause of it all. Forgive me, I thought I was doing right!"

"No, no, Catissou, you are a good woman, and your family are honest folk. I have been betrayed by some rascal. Good-bye to all, and thank you!" he cried, as they led him away.

When they reached the spot where the horses were, my father saw Jansou holding them.

"Ah!" he cried, "it is you who have betrayed me. Scoundrel! If I ever get out you'll be done for, for sure!"

At that the gendarmes fastened a rope to my father's neck, and one of them took the other end in his hand. Then they put the prisoner between them, mounted their horses, and led him away.

To Jansou this villainy brought no luck. Once he had his two louis, he thought himself rich, he who had never seen a louis before. But this did not last long, for the new steward of the château put small farmers on the lands usually held in reserve, so that there was no longer any work for him. In the countryside no one cared to give him work, on account of his wicked deed. So, when he and his family had quickly eaten up the two louis, they took to begging and disappeared. Even to-day in those places, when they wish to speak

of a man they cannot trust, they call him "a traitor like Jansou." Without doubt, he was a scoundrel, but in my opinion those who by threats and bribes caused him to commit this villainy were a hundred times more shameful than he.

CHAPTER II

WHAT is to happen will happen. On learning of the arrest of her husband, my mother gave a deep groan, almost as if she were dying: "O my poor Martissou!"

I began to cry. All day both of us were in the deepest dejection. She sat on a little bench, her hands clasped on her knees, staring fixedly before her, without saying a word. Now and then some thought even more deeply painful than the rest made her groan aloud.

"My poor husband, what will become of you?"

In the evening, since the poor woman had not thought of making our soup, she cut me a slice of bread, which I ate slowly. Then we went to bed. But we were not at the end of our troubles. The next morning, the head steward came to tell my mother that as she could not now manage the farm alone any longer we must at once surrender the house to a successor. The work was already two months behind.

What to do, where to go, we did not know. After much reflection, my mother thought of a man at Saint-Geyrac who owned a long-abandoned tile-works in the forest, where we might perhaps install ourselves, if he was willing. Early next morning, my

mother threw some hay down from the loft, gave part of it to the oxen and left a pile to be put in their manger at noon. Then she tossed a little grass to the sheep, came back into the house, cut me a slice of bread for the day and, kissing me, went off to see the owner of the tile-works, charging me not to wander away.

There was no danger of that, for where should I have gone? Presently I went out of the house and sat down on a stone in front of the door. There I stayed a long time, thinking of my poor father shut up now in prison. From time to time I was seized by fits of sobbing. What a sad day I passed there, before me the bare slopes of the Grillières, where not a single tree appeared; all around the buildings, the farm fields, surrounded by great gray stretches of country; beyond to the north and west the deep woods. At moments, weary of sitting still and watching this horizon, misty and desolate as the future which I saw confusedly in my childish imagination, I got up and walked around the house, or else I went to look at the oxen, calmly ruminating on their straw, which raised their heads on seeing me enter. I gave them a few forkfuls of hay and came back, watching far down the roads to see if my mother was returning. In their stable the hungry sheep were bleating. From time to time I threw them a small handful of grass to satisfy their impatience.

I sat down, looking fixedly at the spot where La-

borie had fallen. I seemed to see him again, with his open mouth, his terrified eyes, the bleeding wound in his chest. About five o'clock our four hens came back from the fields where they had been foraging, and after preening themselves a little decided to mount one by one the little ladder of their hen-house. The day waned and I began to be anxious, not seeing my mother. Soon, however, my ear, accustomed from my out-of-door life to hearing things far away, caught her hurried step coming from the direction of the setting sun. At last she arrived, worn with fatigue, out of breath, for because of me she had come in great haste. I ran to meet her, and she embraced me passionately, as if she had thought me lost. Together we entered the dark house.

Fumbling among the cinders on the hearth, my mother found a live ember, and succeeded by blowing hard in lighting the lantern. Then, having made the fire, she peeled an onion, cut it into small pieces, and placed the frying-pan over the fire, with about half a spoonful of grease in it. This was all that remained in the house. When the onion was fried she filled the pan with water, cut up the bread in the soup-tureen, and when the water had boiled down enough poured it over the bread. Ordinarily, among the poor folk of our region, it was the custom to put a pinch of pepper in the soup to give it a little savor. But we had none left. I cannot say that this poor broth over this wretched black bread made a good dish.

But it was warm, and that was a great deal better than merely dry bread or a cold potato. When we had eaten our soup, we went to bed.

The man at Saint-Geyrac had told my mother that she might go and live in the tile-works. He would ask nothing, but the house was in bad condition. Before leaving, we had to get a man to decide on the value of the leased cattle with the new steward of l'Herm. When the estimate was made, my mother reckoned that there were ten écus owing us. But when she went to have it settled, it was found to be the other way round. We ourselves were in debt forty francs, the other steward told her. Laborie had charged us with a half-sack of wheat of which my mother had no knowledge. He had not written down the full price of a pig which we had sold at Thenon. Moreover, he had failed to record the price of three sheep which my father had remitted to him. Thus we had to leave Combenègre apparently in debt to the gentlefolk. This was a hard blow to my poor mother. We had no more than thirty sous in the house, a hunch of bread weighing six or seven pounds, a few potatoes and the remains of a sack of corn meal weighing rather more than four pounds. We could not last very long with that.

Mion's husband came the next day with his cart to take away our belongings. It was a light load for the oxen—our miserable bed, the wretched cabinet, the table and benches, the kneading-trough, the cask of sour wine, a pot, the kettle, the baking-dish, the frying-

pan, a wooden bucket and small articles like the lantern and the wooden salt holder. All these wretched belongings together were not worth the forty francs we were supposed to owe the gentlefolk of Nansac, thanks to the rascality of that Laborie who wronged us even when he was dead.

The cart took first the hard road which leads towards Lac-Viel, a stony path where the load was much shaken up. Mion's husband had brought hay to feed his oxen, and my mother had placed me on it behind the cart, which she followed. As we went through Bessèdes, two women, holding their little boys by the hand, and an old man seated on a stump, watched us pass. In the eyes of the elders there was pity at seeing us go off like that, alone and fatherless henceforth.

All this region to-day is full of paths and roads. They have built one from Thenon to Rouffignac, which skirts the forest and crosses it near the middle; another which cuts it diagonally, coming from Fosse-magne and running into the road from Thenon near La Cabane; and even a third, further to the west, which comes from the direction of Milhac-d'Auberoche, and also joins the road from Thenon to Rouffignac, between Balou and Meyrignac. It is easy, therefore, to pass through the forest. But in the days of which I speak, the forest was much larger than at present. During the past twenty-five years, a great deal of it has been cleared. At that time there were no well-marked routes except two wide but poor

roads skirting the edge, in which the water cut gullies in winter and flooded the low places, and the paths in the woods used by the charcoal-burners and the poachers.

Shortly after we had left Bessèdes, Mïon's husband left the road we were following to take another. This was not really a road at all but one of those tracks made in the wood by the wheels of the carts which came to carry off the chopped logs. In winter, when the track became too bad in places, people turned off to the right or left and so traced new paths in all directions, uncertain tracks which intercrossed on the heath and in the woods. At times, we found in the mudholes puddles of yellow water which we had to avoid, and further on deep ruts on one side and hummocks on the other that made the cart tip violently and gave us a heavy jolt when the road suddenly became smooth again.

We went slowly, as one must go with oxen over such roads. The day was gray and misty. It seemed as if we were burying ourselves in the fog. Mïon's husband went ahead, calling his oxen, encouraging them with his voice and sometimes pricking them with his goad. You could see that he knew the forest well. He rarely hesitated in taking a path even when it cut right across the one we were following, or, at first insensibly branching off, ended by turning aside altogether. When these half-effaced tracks intercrossed, he sometimes stopped a moment, and looked about him; then getting his bearings, he took the right

way without fail. Yet he told us that he had not been to the tile-works for ten years. We peasants, accustomed to travel day and night in this roadless country, know our way very well when we have passed over it once.

Some of my readers may perhaps wonder why I always say "Mïon's husband." It is because I had never heard him called anything else in our home. I believe his wife called him Pierre, but as she was the man of the family, everyone said "Mïon's husband."

About two o'clock, after crossing a stretch of underbrush, the cart passed out into a great clearing surrounded by woods. In the center was the tile-works, or what remained of it. From a distance it seemed to consist of tumbled roofs, blackened by the weather, but from nearby it looked like a mass of ruins. The dilapidated outhouses still showed some half-decayed wooden posts supporting a part of the frame with the remains of the tile covering on it; on other parts beside it, the broken laths had let the frame sag. The oven where they used to bake the bricks and tiles had crumbled, and vigorous maple shoots were pushing out amid its ruins. The house was not all in quite such bad condition but a little more and it would become so. It was built of wood, brick and loam, plastered together with heavy clay. The walls were crumbling and peeling from the effects of weather and winter, ramshackle like those poor old souls one meets in our part of the country, bent and disfigured with poverty, hard work and age.

Here and there in the holes and chinks of the wall had sprouted seeds carried by the wind, wild purslane, wall artichokes, harts-tongue and parsley piert. The tile-works was covered with moss, sprinkled with a grass as fine as needles, with a few tufts of house-leek here and there. It still held together except at one end, where it was in ruins. Through this great hole, as big as a sheet, rafters were visible, held up by a corner, to which portions of laths were still nailed. Around the house and the tile-works everything was covered with fragments of tiles, bricks and heaps of rubbish, on which were growing luxuriantly those rustic plants that abound in abandoned places and along the borders of old roads where people no longer pass. Thickly and exuberantly, mints with their spicy odor, wild carrots, donkey's cabbage, night-shades, mallows, thistles with the round heads that we call "the combs," and twenty other varieties were crowded together. Farther on in the clearing, the clay-diggings had left holes where greenish water stagnated, and mounds like great graves on which scanty gorse bushes, rare in this poor soil, had grown here and there. The whole scene had an aspect of ruin and desolation which oppressed one's heart. One would have said it was an old battlefield, abandoned after the hurried burying of the dead.

Taking in at a glance the whole melancholy spectacle, my mother gave a little shiver, a *triboulement*, as we say, and her eyes turned to me. But she was a woman of great courage, and she entered the house

with a firm step. I followed her, while Mion's husband undid the cord about the load.

What a house! That at Combenègre was very bare, very dark, very melancholy, but it was a house of comfort compared to this. When the door, which hung only by one hinge, was pushed open, it revealed itself in all its dilapidation. Cracks in the wall let in the daylight here and there, or gave entrance to a plant which thrust itself in from outside. The hearth was rudely built after the fashion of those huts that are made of earth. There was no attic. Above, in a corner, under the rafters, rough planks, put there to dry and forgotten, made a sort of badly joined ceiling, just large enough to shelter a bed. Everywhere else you saw the tiled roof and, in the uncovered corner, the sky. Through this hole the winter rains had made a little puddle in the beaten earth.

Having surveyed all this without speaking, my mother went out to help the man unload the furniture. To do this more easily, he slipped between the oxen and raised the wagon-pole while she took out the iron peg which passed through the rings. Then she called the oxen. The man gently lowered the pole to the ground, and along the incline it made, with the help of my mother, easily slid down the bedstead and the rest of the things. Meanwhile, I carried their armful of hay to the oxen. When everything had been put in the house, my mother drew from a basket the hunch of bread that was folded in a towel, and set it on the table with the salt-dish and an onion which

she took from a little drawer. Then she started to fill the *pichet* with sour wine, but the little that remained in the cask had been so shaken up that it was like mud. So she went out to look for water. Mïon's husband wiped his forehead, sat down on the bench, and ate slowly, cutting the bread in shreds and munching the onion, dipped in salt, in little slices.

When he had finished he closed his knife, drank half a goblet of water, and rose. My mother helped him fasten up the oxen. He took his goad, replied to our thanks by saying it was nothing, wished us good evening, and departed slowly, crossing the clearing and disappearing into the woods.

When we were alone, my mother took me and gave me a long kiss, clasping me tightly against her breast. After this moment of grief had abated, she set to work to make the bed, and finished arranging our poor furniture as well as she could. When that was done, we went out to look for wood. There was plenty of it all about, and soon we had collected a good pile. Under the sheds there were carpenter's chips that served us equally well. But it was not an easy matter to make the fire. In those days chemical matches were unknown, at least in our part of the country, and ordinarily we preserved the fire under the ashes. When you found the fire out, you had to go and beg for some in an old sabot. The neighbors gave with good will on condition that they might have the same favor done to them. Only the innkeepers in the small towns would refuse it on festival or fair days, be-

cause it brought bad luck. Sometimes one had to go quite far, as was the case with us who went to Mion of Puymaigre; but here we knew neither the country nor the neighbors. Fortunately in the drawer of the cabinet there were some flints which my father had picked up whenever he found them, and shaped ready for use. My mother took one; and by striking it against the blade of her shut knife she managed to set fire to a piece of old shredded rag. This bit, put on a handful of dried moss that had been gathered from dead wood, set it on fire, and soon with dead leaves, grass and twigs, and by dint of hard blowing, the flame blazed in the hearth.

When the fire had been lighted we had to go after water. Searching in the neighborhood we found the old well which the tile-makers used. To tell the truth, it was a miserable well, which oozed a few drops in the winter and in the summer held nothing but rain water. It scarcely differed from the hole out of which my mother had taken the drink for Mion's husband, being now half-choked and full of rushes growing out of the pale water. It was impossible to draw water out with the bucket; we had to fill it with the dipper. Returning to our hovel, my mother filled the pot with potatoes and put it over the fire for our supper.

That evening, when we had eaten two or three stewed potatoes with a little salt and were about to go to bed, my mother discovered that there had never been a lock or a bolt on the door. It was closed from within after the ancient manner, by means of a bar

which entered two holes on either side of the wall and so held the door fast. Seeing this, my mother cut with the pruning-bill a piece of wood of the right length, adjusted it firmly, and so closed the door tight. Then we went to bed.

I am sure she slept little that night, tormented as she was by the thought of my poor father, a prisoner at Périgueux, where the guillotine or the galleys awaited him. As for me, not understanding all the consequences of what he had done, I watched the stars awhile, those at least which I could see from the bed through the hole in the roofing, and then fell into a heavy sleep.

In addition to her grief about my father, my mother tormented herself thinking of me and of what was to become of us. The rich, when they are in trouble, can reflect at their ease and give themselves over entirely to their grief, but the poor cannot. Above all, they must get their pay in kind to live and earn bread for their little children. To the calamity that strikes them is added the misfortune of poverty, which does not even give them the freedom to weep. Therefore we peasants are usually sparing of tears. You seldom see us laugh heartily, either; we do not often have any reason for doing so. We laugh like St. Medard from the tips of our lips, remembering the proverb: "Too much laughter brings tears."

Next morning, my mother began to set about finding work. After eating a little breakfast, we left for

Jarripigier, where Mïon's husband had told her that perhaps she could get work by the day with a man named Maly, who had land to cultivate, and often employed day laborers. After walking a long time, we reached the house of this man, who was not at home. But his wife told us that he had no need of anyone at present, and so we had to come back. In the villages we passed through on the edge of the forest my mother asked where she could find work. At Lucaux, an old man who was warming himself in the sun against a wall, told us that at Puypautier, at the home of a rich peasant named G  ral, she could get several days' work among the vines or weeding the wheat. When we reached the village, a boy pointed out to us a big old house where G  ral was at that very moment. When, in answer to his questions my mother told him she was the wife of Martissou of Comben  gre, the servant who was there exclaimed, "Oh! Holy Virgin!" looking at us with a none too pleasant expression. But G  ral silenced her and told my mother that he would give her eight sous a day, and that she could come the next day. She thanked him, and answered that since she could not leave me alone at the tile-works in the middle of the woods, she must beg him, if it would not be an inconvenience, to let me come, too; he could pay her less if I were fed also.

"Very well, bring your boy," said old G  ral, who had not the look of a bad man, "and I will give you five sous instead of eight."

So the next morning we arrived early at Puypautier, and while my mother with another woman picked up the vine-shoots, I amused myself with the little daughter of G  ral's servant, who watched the goat and the geese and was named Lina.

At nine o'clock, Lina's mother called us all to breakfast. On the table was a large green dish in which was smoking a good soup with a quantity of potatoes and beans in it. It was a long time since I had eaten anything so good, and without doubt the others found it to their taste also, for G  ral, his farm laborer, the other woman and the servant, all came back for a second helping, except my mother, whom grief prevented from eating much. The servant "cut the stuffing," as we say, at G  ral's house, for he was an old bachelor; and although I knew quite well that it was she alone who had my mother sent away, it cannot be denied that her soup was good. To be sure, in the house there were all the necessary materials for it.

While we were breakfasting, G  ral tried to cheer my mother, and told her that since Laborie was known to everyone as a bad man, a scoundrel indeed, my father would perhaps be acquitted. But she shook her head sadly.

"You see, G  ral, the people against us are too rich and have too long a reach. The gentlefolk of Nansac will do all in their power to have him condemned."

"That's true," admitted the others.

"In any case, my poor woman," replied G  ral, "you must eat to keep up your strength; otherwise, you will

make yourself ill, and then what will become of your boy?"

"You're right," replied my mother, forcing herself to eat, against her inclination.

What queer things children are! Certainly I loved my father dearly, but at the age I was at that time one is easily diverted. The whole day long I was with Lina, on the roads bordered by thick hedges of evergreens against which the goat reared up at times to graze. While the geese fed on the short grass by the roadside, I watched their actions curiously. When they were surfeited they lay on their bellies, and from time to time cheeped among themselves, as if they were discussing their ideas. Truly, seeing these creatures and so many others elsewhere having their own peculiar cry, their differently sounding voices, their entirely different manner of gabbling for different occasions, one cannot help thinking that they understand each other. So, when Lina's big placid gander, his feet folded under him, his head high, his eye shining, remarked softly to the geese reposing about him: "*Piau, piau, piau,*" it seemed to me that he was saying to them: "It is pleasant here with our crops full." And when a goose replied in the same tone: "*Piau, piau, piau,*" I thought she must be answering, "Yes, it is pleasant here." Then, when a strange dog or someone not of the village came along the road, the male, rising up on his feet, signaled it from afar by a piercing cry like the call of a clarion. At once he was imitated by all the geese repeating his

cry, as much as to say: "We have understood." Then he would remark to them something like, "We must retire," to which they would reply briefly, "Yes," and set off in a line for the poultry yard, he acting as rear-guard, eye and ear attentive, solemn as a donkey drinking out of a bucket, with the leather that bridled him through his nostrils.

Sometimes I used to tell Lina all this, but she laughingly made fun of me, and said that I was as silly as the geese to believe things like that. But it was not ill-naturedly meant and did not at all prevent me from being very fond of her and kissing her often.

A dozen days passed in this way, I amusing myself with Lina, when one evening after supper Géral gave my mother the money for her days' work and told her that he had no longer any need of her at present. While saying this, he had a shamefaced air like a person who is lying. As a matter of fact, there was plenty of work. But from what the other woman who worked with my mother told us, the servant caused him so much trouble about her that to have peace he sent her away. Having received two thirty-sou pieces, my mother tied them up in a corner of her handkerchief, and thanked Géral, and we went off sadly, she anxious over the future, I broken-hearted over leaving Lina.

The next morning, we had to begin over again roaming through the villages about the forest, seeking for day-work. But when evening had come and

we were back at the tile-works without having found anything, I was very tired, so tired that my mother was in despair, not knowing what to do, whether to leave me at home or to drag me the whole day long after her. In the morning, seeing her in such trouble, I told her that I was quite rested and that I could walk very well. Thereupon we started out again, going slowly, stopping from time to time, she carrying me occasionally, though I did not want her to. It went on like that for three or four days, during which we accomplished nothing, wearing ourselves out in a useless search for work and having no longer the good fare we had had at Géral's house, till one evening, as we passed La Grimaudie, a man told us that the mayor of Bars ordered us to go there without fail the next day.

So in the morning we set out and about nine o'clock reached that place. A woman who was undressing her boy in front of a door, crushing the fleas with great blows, pointed out the house to us. Knocking first, my mother opened the door, whereupon a rough voice called out to us to enter.

A hunting dog as thin as a pickax, which was sleeping by the fire, flung himself on us barking.

"Keep still! Keep still!" cried the same rough voice, without being able to silence him.

In the chimney corner, on an armchair covered with straw there sat, her elbows on her knees, her head trembling, a very old woman, who might have been a hundred years old, watching us askance out of the

corner of her dull eye. The mayor was there also, in his kitchen, with one foot on a bench, fastening a spur on his shoe, for it was Tuesday and he was leaving for the market at Thenon. When he had fastened on his spur, he aimed a great kick at the dog, which was still yapping, and drove him under the table. After my mother had explained to him that she had come here by his orders, he said brusquely:

"Then you are the wife of Martissou?"

"Yes, I am, sir."

"If that is the case, you must be at Périgueux a fortnight from to-day, without fail; they are to try your husband. Here is the summons," he added, taking a paper from a little drawer.

"My God, how shall we manage it?" cried my mother, as we were returning along the road.

In truth, out of the three francs which Géal had given her, she had had to buy a loaf of bread, so that we had almost nothing left. Seeing how anxious she was over this, I was angry at not being able to help her, till one morning, roaming about on the edge of the forest, I found, stretched out on a path, a hare, which had been killed the evening before by a shot in the spine, the wound being quite fresh. I picked it up and ran to the house, delighted to carry it to my mother. As it was impossible to know who had killed it, she sold it the next Tuesday at Thenon, along with the two chickens which had fallen to our lot

at Combenègre, in order to make a little money for our journey.

When the day came on which we must leave, we had in the toe of a stocking, tied up with a piece of coarse string, a little more than three francs in sous and liards. My mother put the rest of the hunch of bread in my father's haversack, which Le Rey had given back to us with his knife, slung it over her shoulder, and took a staff of thorn, and after fastening the door to a big nail with a cord to hold it shut, we set out.

We were not any too well clothed to show ourselves in town. My mother had on a worn skirt of drugget, a bodice of brown cloth, much mended, a cotton handkerchief, checked in yellow and red, on her head, brown woolen hose and sabots. I also wore sabots, a knitted cap and stockings, a pair of trousers too short for me of the same stuff as my mother's skirt and very much worn, and a jacket made of an old *sans-culotte* of my father's.

Some of my readers will doubtless ask what a *sans-culotte* is. Well, it is nothing but the jacket of the time of the Revolution, rather short and with a small collar, falling straight like the jackets of the soldiers. In our district, this garment of good patriots took, I do not know why, the name of those who wore it.

To continue,—our path lay across the forest, towards Lac-Gendre, and we took this direction, having first removed our sabots so as to walk more comfort-

ably on the wood-paths. From Lac-Gendre we went to Triderie, then to Bonneval, and finally to Fossemagne, where we found the newly-made highway from Lyons to Bordeaux.

On leaving Fossemagne, my mother made me sit down on the edge of a ditch to rest a little. Half an hour later we started off again, walking slowly, following the outer bank of the road, which is easier for the feet than the middle of the highway. The poor woman, tormented by the thought of what awaited my father, hardly spoke, only giving me now and then a few words of encouragement or taking my hand to help me a little. We met almost no one on the trip: sometimes a man going leisurely on foot, carrying over his shoulder on a stick a small parcel tied up in a handkerchief; or a traveler on a strong, thickset stallion, his cloak bulging over the holsters of his saddle, which revealed the butt ends of his pistols, behind him, fastened to the cantel, a leather chest closed by a little chain and padlock. We saw no carriages on the road, as one does to-day, for only the very richest people owned them.

At a short half-league from Saint-Crépin, we entered a big grove of oaks to rest. My mother gave me a piece of bread, which I ate hungrily, all dry and black though it was. After this, I stretched out on the grass and fell into a heavy sleep.

When I awoke, the sun had moved towards the west, and I saw my mother sitting close by me. Seeing I was awake, she rose and gave me her hand,

and after stretching a little, I also got up to start off again.

Passing through Saint-Crépin, I drank from a fountain which ran into a stone basin near the posting-house, and, well refreshed, I continued to walk valiantly, forcing myself a little so as to show my mother that I was not too tired. Indeed I was not; only my feet burned a little, for it was not the same thing to walk barefoot on a road heated by the sun as in the cool earth of the wood-paths.

It was sunset when we reached Saint-Pierre, for I had slept a long time in the wood. When we had put on our stockings and sabots and had skirted the town, not very large either then or now, my mother noticed an old house, poor in appearance, where they had stuck a pine branch in a hole in the wall as a sign; and, as the door was open, she entered.

A kindly old woman, in a cap with lappets, a checked handkerchief crossed on her breast, and an apron of red cotton cloth, was sitting in a chair, turning her spindle of wool near the table. To my mother's greeting, she replied cordially:

"Good evening, good evening, good folks!"

To the question whether she could give us a little supper and a place to sleep she answered, yes, but that as she no longer had but one bed, the other having been seized to pay the cellar tax, we should have to sleep in the hayloft.

"Oh!" said my mother; "we'll sleep very well in the hay."

"All right, then, draw up to the fire," replied the old woman.

When we had sat down—they are curious in small places, especially the women—the old woman, as she bustled about the pot, began to question my mother, to find out where we were going and for what purpose. She had such an honest air that my mother told her everything in detail, the trouble that had befallen us, the rascality of Laborie, and how my father had fired upon this steward of the gentlefolk of Nansac, they and Laborie having driven him to extremes, even coming to kill his dog in his own yard.

"Oh, the wretches!" cried the old woman. "There are plenty in this neighborhood who would do as much!" she added, putting down her spindle. "Before the Revolution there were no villainies they did not do, and now that they have come back they have begun again, especially of late."

At that she rose brusquely, went to close the door, and lighted the lamp.

"You see, my poor woman," she said, "these nobles are all alike, domineering, proud as peacocks, hard on poor people. But when the other one comes back, he will remember that they betrayed him, and he will throw them out of doors."

"The other one?" asked my mother.

"Eh, yes . . . Poléon, him they sent five hundred thousand leagues away over the sea to a desert island."

My mother had often heard people before the church on Sundays speak of a certain Napoleon who

was emperor and who had fought so many wars that many of the conscripts of Périgord had stayed over there, in unknown countries. But in the region of the Barade Forest, people were not well versed in current affairs, and she replied simply:

"Then it's greatly to be hoped that he comes back soon, since he is a friend of the poor people. For we are too wretched!"

While I was listening to these words, seated on a salting-tub in the chimney corner, I was examining the house, which was in truth very miserable. The old woman's bed was in a corner, protected from the dust of the attic by a canopy and a curtain of the same material, formerly blue and with a pattern but now quite faded. This bed had several chairs beside it, some of which had lost their straw seats, and was loaded at the foot with old clothes. In the opposite corner was the empty spot left by the bed which had been seized and sold. In the middle was a table with a bench. Against the wall, opposite the door, was a shabby kneading-trough where the good woman kept bread and other little things since her cabinet had been sold. A saucepan and a pot were under the trough, a soup tureen and some plates above, and, with the bucket in the sink-stone, that was about all there was. One saw that the king's men had passed there.

As the supper hour was approaching, however, the old woman went out to fetch some armfuls of fagots in the little cellar which communicated with the

kitchen. She started up the fire, before which some beans were already cooking, and hung on the pothook her other pot, in which there was bouillon. That done, she took the cover off the trough, cursing those blackguards of excise men who had made her sell her handy cabinet, took out of it a loaf already cut into, and began to slice it for the soup with a sharp knife, an instrument easier to handle than the pruning-bill we used in our house.

"We'll have supper," she said, "but not till Duclaud arrives."

"You are expecting someone?" asked my mother.

"Yes, a fine lad who sells thread, needles, ribbon, buttons, hooks, pictures like those there," she added, pointing out certain crude prints in faded colors, "and other little things also. . . . You can go and look at the pictures," the old woman said to me. "That'll amuse you while you are waiting for supper. . . . He passes almost every month, on his way to the district of Thenon," she added. "I think he will come this evening; it is his day."

I went to look at the pictures nailed on the walls. There were, among others, the unhappy Wandering Jew, with his stick and long legs, symbol of that poor, disinherited people which has neither hearth nor home; then "Jeannot and Colin," an instructive story, especially in these times when so many people go to their destruction in the cities; then the famous "Credit," a dead man, stretched on the earth, killed by bad creditors who have fled, by his side a goose

holding a purse in its beak with this inscription, "My goose does everything!" a melancholy and disheartening sentence for the poor.

While I was curiously examining these pictures, someone knocked three times with a stick at the door.

"It's Duclaud," said the old woman, going to open it.

He seemed to hesitate on seeing us, but she reassured him:

"You can come in. . . . It's a good woman and her little boy."

Whereupon he entered. He was a strong young fellow, with a brown face and tightly curled hair, wearing a cap of marten skin, a smock of gray striped cotton cloth, and heavy hobnailed shoes. He was bent under the weight of a pack which he carried by means of a large leather breast-strap.

"Greetings to everyone!" he said, leaning his heavy stick against the door.

Then he took off his pack and placed it on two chairs, which the old woman had quickly arranged for that purpose.

"You are tired, my poor Duclaud," she said. "Come over by the fire a little. We shall have supper in no time."

"I should not admit it, Minette, but I shall sup with pleasure. Since Razac, as you can well imagine, my lunch has had plenty of time to disappear."

When the soup had been poured on the bread, we

sat down at table and the old woman served each of us a dishful of good bean and cabbage soup. I was astonished to see Duclaud eat his soup with spoon and fork at once. In our part of the country we were ignorant of this custom, for the good reason that we had no forks. When we had a mess of potatoes or beans for supper, we ate it with spoons. For meat we used a knife and our fingers, but that only happened once a year, at carnival-time.

Duclaud, having finished his soup, took the measure and poured us each out some wine in our dishes. He filled his own plate to the very edge, so that a duckling would have drowned in it. One could see that he felt quite at home and at his ease in the house. This wine was a simple wine of the country, but not as good as that from the neighborhood of Jaures, at Saint-Léon-sur-Vézère, but we who drank only poor, sour wine, often spoiled, for three or four months of the year, and water the rest of the time, thought it very good. After we had drunk, the pedlar offered us some more soup, and, as no one wished any, served himself another dishful, after which he took a second copious *chabrol*, as we call the doctor's draught, drunk from the dish with the rest of the bouillon.

Meanwhile, Minette had placed the beans in a salad plate and put them on the table, whereupon my mother got up, saying she was no longer hungry. But the good old woman suspected that she said this because she feared the expense, and made her sit down again.

"You must eat all the same to keep your strength,"

she said. "Eat, eat, poor woman, otherwise you will never manage to reach Périgueux."

While we were supping, Minette told Duclaud about my father's case, and asked him what he thought of it.

"What can I say?" he exclaimed. "If the judge and jury were men like me, they would see how this man had been driven to extremities by that scoundrel of a steward and those gentlefolk, and he would get off with a year or six months in prison. But, you see, the jury are members of the bourgeois, rich men who, even if they are honest, tend to favor those of their own class. However, there are just men everywhere, and it would only need one or two to win over the others. It often happens that way; you must not despair. Ah!" he added, "how they ought to be punished for unjust and wicked deeds, paying no heed to the evil that may come of them."

That evening, after supper, Duclaud drew from the bottom of his pack some small parcels and other things which he put into a great pocket beneath his blouse, and went out. It has occurred to me since that perhaps he had some dealings in contraband tobacco and powder.

When the time came to go to bed, old Minette said she had been thinking it over, and that since Duclaud was to sleep in the hayloft, my mother and I might share her bed; it would be large enough for three, especially as I was not very big. This we did. No doubt the pedlar entered by the cellar door, which

opened outside, and went up to the hayloft. I did not see him again.

Early the next morning Minette heated the soup and made us eat it. When it came time to pay, she told my mother she would have need enough for her money at Périgueux, where everything was dear; that she could pay on her return if she had anything left. My mother thanked her heartily, but said that it would grieve her to go off like that without paying; besides, she did not know what was going to happen, or whether she would be passing again through Saint-Pierre.

"Well," said the old woman, "if that's the case, you owe me ten sous."

My mother knew that she was asking very little. She gave her the ten sous, and assured her that she would always remember her and her kindness to us.

Minette shrugged her shoulders and said:

"The poor must certainly help each other."

Then they embraced warmly, my mother and she, and we parted with many warm wishes for good luck which, like so many others, came to nothing.

Early in the morning we were thus once more on the great deserted highway. It was a good hour for walking; the rising sun was drying up the light fog which floated up into the air and disappeared. Behind us the cocks of Saint-Pierre were crowing loudly, and this, with the rising fog, presaged rain. Little birds were flying about, chasing one another, among the

hedges of blossoming brush, at the foot of which were sprinkled in the grass little periwinkles and "flowers of March," also called violets. The dew was drying in the newly green fields, and on the tops of the slopes, cultivated half way up, the thicket was beginning to take on the pale green of spring. I was well rested and well filled, and had it not been for the sad mission which was impelling us, it would have been a pleasure to travel so.

A little beyond Saint-Marie we met two merry lads who were walking slowly, strutting a little and singing at the top of their lungs. They were dressed in black velvet, belted with red, and had soldiers' knapsacks on their backs. Caps of black velvet sat jauntily on one side of their heads, from their ears hung golden earrings, and in their hands they carried large canes, bound with ribbons, which they were dexterously swinging, making superb little windmills of them. As they passed they saluted us jovially, and we asked ourselves who such people could possibly be. Since then I have realized that they were wandering minstrels, making the tour of France.

Just as we reached Saint-Laurent the rain caught us, a little fine rain that dampened and covered with mist the fields through which the Manoir slowly wound. Here and there in low places the stream made little swamps, where the water birds nested, and in other places it lost itself among the mallows, only to come out a little later, always slowly, slowly, as if it was sorry to be swallowed up in the Ille.

We had left the château of Lieu-Dieu on our right when suddenly behind us we heard a great rattling noise. We turned and saw a large, handsome carriage, drawn by four horses, with two postilions in big boots, yellow trousers, red waistcoats, jackets of the King's blue, with a coat-of-arms on their sleeves, and hats of waxed leather. I turned around in curiosity to see this carriage pass, and my mother did the same to wait for me. When it reached us I saw through the big windows the Comte and Comtesse de Nansac and their eldest daughter. On the seat in front was the guard Mascret, and behind a man-servant with a maid. My mother looked boldly at these gentlefolk, her jaws set, her brows scowling, while I felt my heart rise in a violent sensation of hatred. Seeing us thus, ill-clothed, wet, splashing barefooted on the soaked earth, they turned away their eyes, with a cold, scornful air, and the carriage passed rapidly by, spattering us with drops of muddy water.

When we arrived at Lesparrat, I saw the beautiful plain of the Ille and the river with its green water, bordered by poplars, which runs below the château of Petit-Change. It seemed as if we had entered another country, having left behind the narrow valley of the Manoir, enclosed between two arid slopes of gray land, with their stunted trees. But when we had climbed the little hill of Pigeonnier and saw Périgueux in the distance, with its houses rising tier on tier on the Puy Saint-Front, and, at the very top, mounting towards the sky, the old clock-tower,

scorched by the sun of ten centuries, it was even more exciting. I had never seen anything but the little town of Rouffignac, and I could not imagine such a pile of houses as this, though I was only seeing a part of it. Eagerness to arrive gave me new legs, and from that moment I no longer felt tired.

We skirted the garden of Monplaisir and crossed the suburb of Tournepiche, or rather of Barris. Then, when we had passed the ancient convent of the Récollets, which is now the Normal School, we reached the Pont-Vieux, with its pointed arches, defended formerly by an octagonal tower, the foundations of which can still be seen.

Spring rain can never be called bad weather, says the proverb. This one had wetted us, but now it had stopped and I thought no more about it, absorbed as I was in all I was seeing. Along the whole length of the river, on both right and left, old houses seemed to step down from the Puy Saint-Front and mirror themselves in the waters. Above the bridge at the corner of the street of Port-de-Graule there was a great, ancient house in freestone, with its façade turned towards the Ille, superb with its elaborately wrought machicolation, its large bays, its high pointed roofs. Next to it was the beautiful Maison Lambert with its three tiers of balconies overlooking the river and held up by lovely carved pillars. Further off, proudly dominating the river rose the tower of Barbecane, with its crenelated platform, its machicolation, and its loop-holes for culverins and arquebusses, a

beautiful relic of the ancient town, which has since been razed to the ground in uprisings. A little further off, the pointed rocks of Arsault rose proudly.

Below the bridge was the old fortified mill of Saint-Front, somber and strange-looking with its thick walls, its narrow bays, its half-wooden, half-stone sheds, held up by the main rafters or glued to the walls like swallows' nests. Under its dark arches the waters of the mill-dam, divided by the stone buttresses, were slowly swallowed up. Further on was a strange house, with a balcony in the form of a ship's poop, planted on a mass of masonry, which advanced sharply into the water like the prow of a galley. One would have said it was a medieval ship, with its forecastle in front, at anchor in the river. At the very back, the leafy trees of the garden of the prefecture were reflected in the water.

And above and below as well, between these principal features, was a swarm of houses, descending, like a flock of sheep in disorder, to the river and bathing their feet in it, old houses with odd gables holding jars for sparrows' nests, with balconies of ornamented wood, with projecting stories, held up by enormous stone supports, with narrow or mullioned windows, with sweet basil growing in old cracked tureens, or mignonettes in pots full of holes; buildings with strange louvers which seemed to spy on the river. A few of these houses were built up of clay with wooden frames; shapeless hovels, cracked, scaly, twisted, falling down from age like poor old women,

they leaned over the Ille, into which they seemed about to fling themselves. Others nearby, like drunken women, had lost their balance and leaned against the houses nearest them or held themselves up on enormous crutches for support. Others still, of freestone, solidly built—some of them on the remains of ancient ramparts—reflected in the clear water their tiers reddened by the sun, their irregular bays, their covered galleries, their roofs of sharp slate, their irregular cat holes, their massive chimneys smoking under pointed hoods. All these dissimilar houses, of different aspects, each one with its own architecture, materials, ornaments, excrescences, its own style—some being the very epitome of wretchedness—crowded to the banks of the Ille as if anxious to be reflected in it. Some extended over the water or plunged their stone pillars into it, others drew back as if they feared to wet their feet, and pushed against the river's edge their massive terraces with heavy railings. Others raised themselves up a story above the roof of their neighbors to see the Ille flow by, and to watch on the other side the meadows bordered with poplars, where the washwomen with noisy paddles were drying their linen. Here and there on a terrace was a tiny garden as big as a hand, or at the foot of a wall a weeping willow falling over the water. At the opening of the river were moored the boats—barges of fishermen or dyers.

All this mass of strange, irregular buildings, heaped up in disorder, all this pile of gables, galleries, exterior

stairways, sheds, lean-tos tiled with slates, large and narrow bays, pillars, intercrossed beams, stone brackets; supports, projecting stories, wooden balconies, dormer windows, flat or pointed roofs, blue or red; strange chimneys, rusty weather-vanes—all was spread out in the sun in a confused jumble, where the shadows played over the colors,—blue, green, red, tawny-gray,—or pricked out from among the clothes-lines some skirt, red as a poppy, drying at a window. I cannot describe it, but it was more beautiful than it is to-day.

When I had taken this all in with one long glance, stock-still at the entrance to the bridge, deafened by the noise of the water rushing from the mill-dam, my mother pulled me away by the hand, and we climbed the street which led to the Place du Greffe, a steep street paved with coarse red stones from the river, which the morning rain had set glistening in the sun. On each side were the shops, with openings round or pointed, or arched like a basket handle, without window fronts, dark in the interior: wretched huckster shops, where dangled rosin candles, mean little shops where they sold crockery or sabots, or wine by the pot or the pint; little workrooms where toiled the nail-makers, chair-makers with their humming lathes, cobblers, pulling their waxed thread, lantern-makers, hammering the tin with a wooden mallet. All these tradesmen, hearing our sabots on the paving-stones, raised their heads, and seemed to say, "Where the devil do these people come from?" Higher up on

the square, right up against the great, black walls of Saint-Front, were tiny little wooden huts, miserable booths made of earth, cabins of perpendicular stone, where were installed the dealers in dried fruit, vegetables, pigeons—and butchers who sold meat from the carcass.

When we had arrived before the porch of the registry, we stopped, head in air at the sight of the old building and its clock-tower with its little columns, lighted by the sun, around which the swallows whirled with sharp cries. Then my mother, lowering her head, saw a woman before the entrance selling wax-candles, and conceived the idea of burning one for my father's sake. Having bought it for six liards, she entered the cathedral, I following her.

What superb grandeur! How small I felt under these vaults suspended in the air! In the chapel at l'Herm I had felt nothing but a lively curiosity; in the church at Rouffignac I had also felt at ease; but in this old Saint-Front, with its gigantic pillars, blackened by time, its walls green with damp, which had watched without flinching the events of ten centuries, it was quite another matter. I, a small child, ignorant and weak, felt myself lost in the immensity of the building, crushed by its size, and at this moment experienced something like an impression of religious awe which increased the further we penetrated the deserted church, over the great flagstones that echoed to the vaults the sound of our sabots. In a corner my mother noticed on a massive pedestal a statue of

the Virgin, and went up to it. As far as I can remember, it was a very old stone statue, rather naïvely cut; the sculptor, however, had been able to give to the face of the mother of Christ an expression of tender pity and infinite goodness. In front of the Virgin had been placed a sort of candle-stand with iron points, where at this moment a poor man's candle like ours was just burning out. Having lighted her candle, my mother stuck it on a point, and, kneeling down, prayed in patois, as she could not speak French, entreating the Virgin Mary just as if she had been present. Her prayer can be translated thus:

"I salute you, most gracious Mother; the good God is with you; you are blest among all women, and Jesus, the fruit of your womb, is also blest.

"Holy Virgin, I am a poor woman who does not know how to address you as I should. But you who know everything, you understand me just the same. Have pity on me, holy Virgin! Sometimes, indeed, I have forgotten to pray to you. But you know the poor have not always the time. Have pity on us all, holy Virgin, and save my poor Martissou. He is not a bad man, not a rogue, he is only a little hot-headed. If he committed that wicked deed, he was driven to it, holy Virgin. That Laborie was a scoundrel in all sorts of ways: you know it well, holy Virgin. What made my poor man finally lose patience was that he had known for a long time that this rascal was always insulting me; he had heard it one day up in the hayloft.

"Ah, holy, good Virgin, I entreat you, save my poor Martissou! I will bless you all the days of my life, holy Virgin, and before I return I will burn a candle ten times larger than this one. Do it, holy Virgin, do it!"

While my mother was praying in a low voice and with a piteous tone I was wiping my eyes. Having finished, she made a great sign of the cross and took up her stick from the ground, and we went out.

Under the porch my mother asked the woman who had sold her the candle where the prison was.

"There, close by," said the woman, "you have only to climb the rue de la Clarté in front of you. At the end of it, turn to the right. Once on the Coderc, you will find the prison in front of you."

When we had reached the square, bordered at this period with ancient houses in the style of that at the corner of the rue Limogeane, we saw in the background on the site of the present market-place the ancient Hôtel de Ville, which had served as a prison since the Revolution. People say in derision, "gracious as a prison door," and they speak truly. This one did not give the lie to the proverb. Solidly barred with iron and reinforced with nails, with a little closely barred window, it had a sinister air, as if it preserved the memory of all those condemned ones who had passed over the threshold on their way to the galleys or the scaffold.

My mother raised the heavy iron knocker, which

fell with a dull sound. We heard a step, accompanied by the jingling of keys, and the window opened.

"What do you want?" said a hard voice.

"To see my husband," answered my mother.

"And who is your husband?"

"Martissou of Combenègre."

"Ah! the murderer of Laborie. Well, you can't see him without permission. His lawyer is with him at this moment; wait until he comes out."

And the window closed.

My mother sat down on the stone horse-block near the door, and I drew back a few steps, curious to see this old Town Hall which had witnessed so many generations pass. It was a mass of irregular and unequally-sized buildings, solidly built to resist attack. On one side was a massive detached house pierced with grilled bay windows, three stories high and ending in a crenelated terrace. On the other side was a sort of square pavilion, but narrower, with a pointed roof. Between these two buildings, in a lower structure, surmounted by a machicolation, there opened the door of which I have spoken, which led through a vaulted passage to a little interior court. Around this court and close by the rest of the structure were other buildings connected with it, some of them added after it had been built. The whole was dominated by a tall square belfry, with battlements, with gargoyles at the corners, and a very pointed roof surmounted with a weather-vane.

While I was looking at all this, the door opened and a young gentleman said to my mother:

"Are you the wife of Martin Ferral?"

"Yes, sir, at your service, if I could do anything," said my mother, getting up.

"Just now you cannot see your husband, poor woman, but to-morrow when he goes to the assizes you will see him. I am his lawyer," he added. "Come home with me a little while; I must speak with you."

And he took us to his room, on the second story of a house in the rue de la Sagesse, No. 11, where there is still a pretty old door with pilasters and sculptured ornaments. When we had climbed the winding staircase in an octagonal tower, the man bade us enter his room and sit down. Then he began to question my mother about a great many things. As she answered he wrote it down. He asked her if these proposals which Laborie had made her had been heard by anyone, and she answered, no, no one had heard them except my father, who did so quite by chance, for this man was sly and hypocritical, but that everyone knew he attacked the young women who were under his authority, such as the farmers' wives, or those who went to the château for daily labor. Everyone knew this, for the women told each other about it as they gossiped at the bakehouse or washed their clothes at the brook, at least those did who, like Mïon of Puymaigre, had not listened to him.

"Good," said the lawyer, "I shall have this cited as evidence with the other things."

When he had finished his questions, he explained to my mother what she must say before the court, and how; that she must tell the whole story of Laborie's shameful pursuit, and relate one by one all the injuries he had done to them and caused others to do. He urged her to be sure to say that it was true that my father was out of his head with rage, and that he only fired on Laborie on seeing him return to the guard the gun with which he had wounded her in the forehead and killed his dog.

As we were about to leave, the lawyer asked my mother where we were staying, and when she answered that she did not know where we should find shelter, since we had only just arrived, he took his hat and led us to a little inn in the rue de la Miséricorde. After recommending us to the innkeeper, he told my mother to be at the court the next day at ten o'clock, without fail. When she asked him if he had much hope, he made a gesture and said:

"Everything that is in the hands of men is uncertain, but the best thing to do is to keep hoping to the very end."

CHAPTER III

THE next morning at the appointed hour we stood before the building of the ancient Présidial, which is still called by this name, and which was on the Place du Coderc, just opposite the prisons, at the spot where No. 8 is to-day. From the entrance door you passed through a vestibule, which ended in a little dark court surrounded by high walls. While we were waiting in this court, talking to the people from our neighborhood who had been summoned as witnesses, heavy, quick steps sounded in the passage, and my father came in, his hands chained, escorted by three gendarmes. My mother gave a terrible cry, clasped her arms about his body, and embraced him warmly, crying and lamenting, while I clutched him by one leg and wept.

"Come, come," said the gendarmes, "that's enough, that's enough, you will see him later."

"Give me the boy," said my father.

Then my mother, taking me in both hands, raised me to his neck, which I clutched with all the strength in my little arms.

"My poor Jacquou! my poor Jacquou!" said my father, embracing me.

Finally, we had to separate, half willingly, half by

compulsion, as we were pulled from behind by the gendarmes, who led their prisoner away.

After we had waited a long time, a bailiff called my mother and we entered a long, high chamber, with ribbed vaults, and dimly lighted by two pointed windows opening into a court. At the back, on a platform enclosed by a wooden railing, three judges sat before a large table covered with a green cloth and cluttered with papers. The one in the center wore a red robe, which had a sinister suggestion; the two others were clothed in black, and all three wore spectacles. On either side of the platform, before very small tables, sat the prosecutor and the recorder. On the wall at the back, above the judges, a large picture represented Jesus Christ on the cross, all drenched in blood.

Jury, lawyers, gendarmes, the accused man, the public: the arrangement was all about the same as it is to-day, except that nowadays judges, jurors, lawyers, everyone, wears a beard or a mustache, while at that time all except the gendarmes were clean-shaven.

While my mother was testifying, a gentleman repeated in French what she said in patois. I did not pay great attention to it, occupied as I was in looking at my father, who was also looking at me; but all at once, in the stress of her feeling, my mother raised her voice high, and, turning about, I saw that everyone was watching this tall woman, with her fine figure, under her wretched garments, and her beautiful face,

with black hair and eyes which shone as she spoke in her husband's behalf.

When she had finished, the King's prosecutor rose and made his address with broad gestures and bursts of speech which resounded through the hall. I did not understand all that he said; it seemed to me, however, that he was trying to make the twelve gentlemen of the jury believe that for a long time my father had had the intention of murdering Laborie. What proved it, according to him, was the threat which he had made to Mascret some time before, that he would make trouble if anyone killed his dog. He therefore deserved the penalty of death.

You can guess in what a state we were, my mother and I, on hearing the prosecutor speak of death. As for my father, he did not seem to listen, and his gaze, fastened on us, seemed to say: "What will become of my wife and my poor boy if I am condemned?"

When the prosecutor had finished, our lawyer rose and pleaded for my father. He pointed out, from all the testimony that had been heard, what a scoundrel this Laborie was; he described all the evil he had done us, emphasizing especially the shameful proposals with which he had unceasingly pursued my mother; and finally showed clearly that it was in a burst of anger that my father had killed this bad man, and not with deliberate design. In short, he said all that was possible to say to excuse him, but he only succeeded in saving my father's head. He was condemned to twenty years in the galleys.

When the president pronounced sentence, a dull murmur ran through the audience, and we ourselves, my mother and I, began to wail and lament, stretching out our arms to the poor man, as the gendarmes led him away. And in the crowd, as everybody was filing out, I heard the Comte de Nansac say to Mascrot:

"Now, we are rid of him! He will perish in the hulks!"

Two days later, the lawyer, having got permission, took us to see my father. What sad moments we spent in that jail! I will pass over them now, for even after so many years it hurts me yet to think of them.

On coming out, with death in her soul, my mother asked the lawyer if there was no way of getting a little mercy for my father or having the sentence reconsidered.

"No, my poor woman," he said. "If he is well-behaved, he may get some slight diminution of his sentence over there, but with the Comte de Nansac against him, you must not depend too much upon it. As for reversing the judgment, I see no grounds for it, and besides, even if there were any, I should not advise your husband to make use of them. It was only by a hair's breadth that he escaped being sentenced for life.

"Stay here a little longer," he added, as he left us; "I will try to arrange for you to see him once more."

After my father's conviction, my mother, who had

lost all hope, neither ate nor slept. A slight, low fever made her eyes burn and her cheeks flush, and this fever increased so that on the third day she kept her bed, while I watched through the window-panes the blackened tiles of the houses opposite, where now and then a cat slowly passed and presently disappeared through its hole. The next day, however, my mother got up, and we went out on the streets, walking slowly, she holding me by the hand, and turning back continually to the prison, as if there was some advantage for us in watching the walls behind which my father was confined.

At other times, I should have been curious to see the town, but at that moment grief deprived me of interest in all these things, new as they were to me. People in the streets or on the steps of entrances and shops looked at us curiously, well knowing, from our air and our attire, that we had come from one of those very wild districts of Périgord, La Double, or the plains of Nontronnais, or the Barade Forest, as was indeed the case.

On the afternoon of the fifth day, we were going up the rue Taillefer, towards Saint-Front, mechanically looking at the shops of the pharmacists, liquor dealers, grocers, butchers, hatters, and umbrella vendors, of which at this time it was full, when, as we reached the Place de la Clautre, we saw a big crowd.

In the middle of the square, at the spot where they set up the guillotine, there was a little stage, four or five feet high, from the middle of which rose a strong

post supporting a small bench. On this bench a man was sitting, his hands chained and fastened to the post by an iron collar which went around his neck. This man was my father! On the scaffold the executioner stood waiting, and around him four gendarmes, with sabers drawn, mounted guard and kept the crowd at a distance. My mother, seeing her Martissou in this sad plight, gave a piteous groan, and began to weep into her apron, while I, full of terror, clutched her skirt, silently weeping also. In front of us, some person was reading aloud the writing placed above the head of the unhappy man exposed in the iron collar:

“Martin Ferral, called the Croquant of Combenègre, commune of Rouffignac, condemned to twenty years of hard labor for murder.”

A long moment we stood there, hidden behind the curious spectators and weeping in silence. At times, when the crowd moved, I caught glimpses of the executioner, who had the air of being very much bored with it all, and was watching the time on a big silver watch which he pulled from the pocket of his breeches by a short chain decorated with knick-knacks. Meeting him in the street, without knowing who he was, one would never have said that it was he who did the guillotining, he had such a good face. Besides, he was well-dressed, as the saying goes, “fine as an executioner who is taking the Easter communion,” with his big frock-coat of royal blue, falling just to his boottops, his high muslin cravat, and his little stove-

pipe hat. At last, so long had we been standing there, the clock-tower of Saint-Front struck four o'clock. Then the executioner pulled the key out of his pocket, opened the padlock on the iron collar which held my father by the neck, and, taking him by the arm, led him to the foot of the stairs that went up to the scaffold, and turned him over to the gendarmes, who took him away. We ourselves followed at a little distance, watching him go off, his head high, his manner confident, in the midst of the four gendarmes. Although people stared at him curiously from the steps of the entrances and shops, I am sure he did not even blink his eyes. It was not so with us; we had a melancholy air, sad faces, and wet eyes which we wiped on the backs of our hands. Those who saw us pass said to each other:

“That must be his wife and his boy.”

That night I slept poorly, my head full of bad dreams. At times I awoke with a start and pressed against my mother, who, poor soul, did not sleep at all, and fondled me long to quiet me. When day came, she arose, and, letting me sleep, sat down by the window, looking blindly out, lost in her grief. When I opened my eyes about seven o'clock, I saw her thus on the chair, her arms stretched out, her hands clasped, her head bent, her gaze fixed on the floor. From the street arose the cries of the cake and chestnut vendors, and this succeeded in waking me. My mother dressed me and we went out, thinking to see my father again on that day, as his lawyer had led

us to hope we might. So we went straight to the prison, where he had told us to wait for him. On the road my mother bought for two liards some dry chestnuts, which, as the season was past, were not very good, and we sat down close to that terrible iron door. While we were there, however, and I was taking the chestnuts one by one from my mother's apron pocket, as she meditated sadly, there came up a great wagon with a long black body, shaped like a covered van, and pierced only on the sides with tiny, iron-barred windows, big as a man's hand. It stopped before the prison. A man in a gray uniform, with a short saber hung on a white belt, got down. He knocked on the prison door, which opened, and shut behind him.

At once a group of children, curious men and women, and idlers gathered about the wagon, saying one to another:

"There is the convicts' wagon, to take away those who have just been condemned."

Chilled at these words, my mother and I had risen, when the door opened again and the man with the saber came out, preceding a gendarme after whom came three chained men, the last of them my father. Another gendarme followed. The man in gray opened a little solid heavily barred door at the back of the wagon, and made the condemned men climb in. On seeing my father go off like this, without bidding us good-bye, we broke into loud weeping, but, although

he was shoved along by the gendarmes, he turned and called out to my mother :

“Courage, wife! Think of the boy!”

Then a gendarme climbed up behind him, the door was locked, another gendarme placed himself in front with the man in gray, and the driver whipped up his three horses, which set off at a fast trot.

For a moment we stayed there, stunned, like simpletons, sobbing and paying no attention to the loungers who had collected about us.

One man in a leather apron, however, I heard say :

“I saw him tried, that fellow, and by my faith he is worth a hundred times more than the man he killed. . . . As for those who drove him to it, they are more guilty than he. Ah! twenty years ago we should have taught them reason!”

When we went to the lawyer’s house, he was much astonished to learn that my father had gone, for they had assured him that the convict wagon would not come until the next day. But whether they had deceived him on purpose or the wagon had come a day early, at any rate it was all over. We must be guided by reason, as he said. After he had comforted us with kind words, and consoled us a little by promising to send us news of my father, my mother thanked him earnestly for all he had done to save her poor husband, and also for all his kindnesses to us. And when she added that, being penniless, she was totally unable to recompense him for all his trouble, he answered :

"I never take anything from poor people; so do not trouble yourself about that."

At this my mother asked his name, assuring him that as long as we lived we should both be grateful to him.

"My name is Vidal-Fongrave," said he. "I am glad that it is not to ungrateful people I have been of service. But don't exaggerate things; I have only done my duty as a man and as a lawyer."

We parted from M. Fongrave, and my mother decided to leave immediately, since we no longer had any reason for remaining at Périgueux, and it was early. First, we went to the inn, where she asked the landlady how much we owed her, trembling for fear she should not have enough money. But the woman answered:

"You owe me nothing at all, good woman. M. Fongrave has paid for everything in advance, and wait! he has even asked me to give you this."

And she held out to her an écu of a hundred sous, folded in a paper.

"My God," exclaimed my mother, with tears in her eyes. "There are still good people in the world. Tell M. Fongrave, I beg you, that I did not thank him enough just now, but that all the days of my life, when I remember my poor husband's misfortune, I shall think of his goodness."

"Ah!" said the woman, "he is a fine young gentleman. And, without wishing to wrong the other lawyers, I think there is no one like him."

Having left the inn and reached the Place du Greffe, we went down again towards the Faubourg des Barris, and a moment later were in the open country on the highway.

My mother, holding my hand to help me, walked slowly. At times, she sighed heavily, as if she had received a heavy blow, thinking of the hard life of the galleys my father was to lead over there, just where we did not know. If she was broken-hearted, she was in less anguish, however, than when she came, for the terrible image of the guillotine had disappeared from her imagination. But there remained the appalling thought of her poor Martissou, separated from her forever and dying in the convict ship, as the Comte de Nansac had said, of grief and misery, under the rod of the convict wardens.

At Saint-Laurent-du-Manoir, near a road-house, a heavy cart, hitched to four strong horses, had stopped. We had gone three hundred feet beyond the place, when we heard behind us the noise of the little bells the horses wore on their collars. The man who was driving them was a big jovial fellow, wearing a wagoner's smock, with a pipe in his mouth, cracking his whip as he swung his arms, while a cunning little white dog on the hood of the cart ran barking from one end to the other. As soon as the cart had come up to us, the man accosted us without ceremony and asked my mother where we were going. At her reply he said:

"I am going to sup at Thenon this evening. I will carry you there; you look very tired, poor souls."

And without waiting for my mother's consent, he stopped his horses and placed me in a great basket, hung under the cart, which contained some straw and the man's rough woolen cloak. I lay down on this, and soon, rocked by the motion, fell asleep.

When I awoke the sun was sinking, casting over the road the long shadows of the horse and wagon and also of the wagoner who was walking, keeping pace with his shaft horse. Looking for my mother, I saw her heavy sabots under the front of the wagon, where she was sitting. By this time we were approaching Fossemagne, and, as my mother wished to get down, the wagoner told her it was not very wise to enter the woods with night coming on. It would be better for us to come as far as Thenon, where he would give us supper and a night's lodging. But my mother thanked him heartily and answered that, since we still had a good hour and a half of daylight, we had time to reach home.

"As you wish, good woman," he said, halting his horses.

When my mother thanked him again for his kindness, which had done us good service, he answered that it was nothing, bade us good evening, cracked his whip, and cried:

"Hue!"

And the horses started up again, with difficulty getting their heavy load under way.

We were once again on the borders of the road we had taken some days before to go to Périgueux, and, thanks to that good fellow of a carter, were well rested. We set off at a round pace, measured, however, by the length of my little legs. On her shoulder my mother carried on a stick a five pound loaf which she had bought at Périgueux before leaving. At Lac-Gendre, the farmers who had seen us on our way, asked what had happened, and at my mother's reply the woman cried out:

"Good holy Virgin! Is it possible!"

Then she invited us to come in, saying that we could have supper with them. But to tell the truth, I do not think it was a very sincere invitation, for she did not urge us when my mother excused herself, saying that we had only enough time to reach home before night. Exchanging a "God be with you!" we left them and entered the deep forest.

The sun was still dimly lighting the tops of the tall trees, but it was getting dark in the thick undergrowth, and far away in the low places a light mist was floating. The cool of evening was beginning to fall. From all directions the magpies, which had been out foraging in the fields and in the staddles, were flying towards the forest to roost, and, as is their way, were chattering like mad before going to sleep.

While we were in the little valley which comes from Grand-Bonnet, passes below La Granval, and descends towards Saint-Geyrac, the sun fell quite below the edge of the woods, and twilight spread over the forest,

darkening the woody slopes and the clearings in the chestnut groves about us. At the same time, far ahead of us, the evening Angelus sounded from the clock-tower of Bars, and soon, on our right, more faintly, that of Rouffignac. My mother took my hand again and hurried her steps, but for all that it was quite dark when we reached the tile-works.

The door was still fastened by the piece of string which we had put there on leaving. We undid it and entered. Nothing seemed changed in the hut. But coming back from Périgueux, where we had seen such fine houses and pretty shops, we found it more miserable than ever. With the thought of my father in our minds, we would have found the most beautiful dwelling sad. I said that nothing was changed in the house. When my mother had lighted the rosin candle with the aid of the flint and a stick dipped in sulphur, she saw on the beaten earth the trace of nailed shoes. Who could have come? For what purpose? Robbers? And to steal what? Finally, not knowing how to explain it, my mother put the bar on the door, and after we had eaten a bit of bread, we went to bed.

From the next day, in spite of all her grief, the poor woman began to worry about finding work by the day. She could not think of returning to Géral, because of the servant who had "cut the stuffing" at his house, as we say of those who become mistresses. Because of Lina I regretted this very much. In our neighborhood there were more farmers and small holdings, than well-to-do proprietors who employed day labor-

ers. At the other end of the forest, near Saint-Geyrac, was the estate of l'Herm, of which there could be no question. On this side of Rouffignac was Tourtel, which belonged to M. de Baronnat, who, from what I had heard, was a former judge of the court at Grenoble. Beyond that was the château of Cheylard, where she might have found some work now that the season was beginning. But these places were too far from the tile-works. By dint of searching, my mother found employment with a man at Marancé, whose eldest boy had gone to enlist, for at this time, after the fall of Napoleon, lots were no longer drawn. This man, therefore, needed someone to help him, since his wife always had a nursing child on her arm and four or five children about her skirts, and was consequently of no use. So he engaged my mother at six sous a day with food. But when she suggested bringing me, as she had done with Géral, he told her sternly that there were already enough children at his house to drive him mad, that there were even too many of them, and that for this reason he did not want any more.

My mother was full of despair, but I told her not to fret on my account, that I could quite well stay by myself at the tile-works without being frightened. All the same, she was not satisfied; but, as we say in the country, "necessity makes old age trot;" the poor cannot often follow their desires, and she had to resign herself to it.

Every morning, therefore, at daybreak, she went

off to Marancé, a trip of about three-quarters of an hour. As for me, I was left to myself. The first day I scarcely left the house and its vicinity, but I quickly grew tired of being shut up at home, and ventured into the forest. I was not afraid of the wolves, knowing well that at this season, when they could find dogs, sheep, geese and chickens to eat, they were not dangerous to men, and that they slept in their dens in the forest when they were fed, or went prowling far off among the flocks. Besides, in my pocket I had my father's knife, fastened to the end of a string. The knife, and a stick, cut short so I could wield it, gave me boldness. As for robbers, it was said indeed that they hid in the forest, but I never thought of them. That is one anxiety from which the poor are free; unfortunately, plenty of others are left for them.

It seems that in ancient times the forest was much vaster and more extensive than it is at present, for it stretched over the parishes of Fossemagne, Milhac, Saint-Geyrac, Cendrieux, Ladouze, Mortemart, Rouffignac, and Bars, and came even to the gates of Thenon. Even at this time, when I was a small boy, the forest, although not as large as formerly, was nevertheless more extensive than it is to-day, for a great deal of it has since been cleared. It was divided, as it is now, into several districts having special names,—the forest of l'Herm, the forest of Lac-Gendre, the forest of La Granval. But when people spoke of all these woods, which were close together, they said, as they still say, the "Barade Forest," which means, in

other words, the "Closed Forest," because it belonged to the lords of Thenon, of La Mothe, and l'Herm, who forbade the bringing of flocks of sheep into it.

The woods were not everywhere in any too good condition, at the time we lived at the tile-works; at one time they had been burned in several places, and it was said that when the old nobleman to whom almost all these woods belonged at the time of the Revolution had been ruined, he had cut down all the big trees and other timber before it was ready, and had finally sold the greater part of his forest for a scrap of bread. In spite of that, a few years later you could still find dense undergrowths and beautiful trees in places that were difficult to utilize. There were secluded spots in forgotten hollows, dense thickets of gorse and broom and heather, intermixed with brambles and brakes which seemed like little trees. It was in these impenetrable thickets that the wild boars, called in patois "porcs-singlars," had their lairs, from which they came out at night to root in beet and potato fields about the villages. You scarcely ever saw them by day, unless they were chased by the Count's hounds, except for an occasional sow, crossing a distant clearing, followed by her young trotting after her.

Two roads traversed the forest: the great royal Bordeaux-Brives highway, running also from Limoges to Bergerac, which passed by l'Herm and La Croix-du-Ruchard, where it branched into a road running from Rouffignac through the dense woods to

Jarripigier and thence to Thenon; the other, the great highway running from Angoulême to Sarlat, which passed through Milhac-d'Auberoche near Lac-Négre to Lac-Gendre, and a quarter of a league from Las Motras crossed the Bordeaux-Brives road and went on towards Auriac, passing to the left of Bars.

These roads were not kept up like the roads of to-day. The two principal ones at least were only broad tracks, forty or forty-eight feet wide, as can still be seen from the sections which remain where those whose property borders upon them have not made encroachments. They went straight up and downhill without any cutting or filling; in some places washed out, in others grass-grown; leading straight to their destinations without any detour; melancholy and grandiose among the wide, dark woods that bordered them. Sometimes, as one looked at these roads stretching into the distance for perhaps half a league straight to the summit of a hill, without a traveler, without a pedestrian in sight, stony, bare or green, overgrown here and there with wild plants or low-growing heather, there would suddenly appear on this deserted, ruined highway, the mules of the Treasury service, escorted by the marshal's mounted gendarmes, carrying in the King's strong-boxes the money from the poll- and salt-taxes. Elsewhere, in a wild valley through which the road passed, there would be a dismal bottom land, damp in summer, a bog in winter, remote from any dwelling, in the midst of the woods and surrounded by dense thickets. When night fell,

you would begin to look about you as if you felt that highway robbers might step out from a dark clump of trees. Along these wide roads, there were tracks made by carts that carried off the great logs,—tracks which were effaced after the logging was over, and little poachers' paths which plunged into the undergrowth, wound about through the thickets, followed the valleys, turned about the little hills, or crossed one another at their summits, where there were good places to watch for hares.

One met scarcely anyone in the woods. Sometimes in the evening one caught a glimpse of a peasant in his blue cotton cap, wearing hay-filled sabots in winter, barefoot in summer, hiding the lock of his gun under his torn vest, plunging into the undergrowth on his way in the moonlight to post himself at the border of a clearing, there to lie in wait for the hare when he left his burrow and went out to the pasture. Or, you would sometimes see him at a cross-roads haunted by wolves, waiting, hidden behind a tuft of broom, for the sharp-eared beast which comes out in the middle of the night to bay dismally, his muzzle raised towards the moon. In the daytime, at long intervals, you might find a wood-guard on these little paths, his badge on his arm, come to give orders for some heather to be cleared or wood cut. And still more rarely, a file of five or six mules, carrying charcoal for the forge at Eyzies.

Like all the children in our neighborhood, I climbed like a squirrel. At times when I found a great tree

on the summit of a high ridge, I mounted to the very top and looked out over the immensity of the woods, stretching out of sight over the uplands, the hills, the gullied ravines. Here and there in a clearing there would be an isolated house on the edge of the forest, a pointed clock-tower above dark masses of woods, or the smoke of a charcoal burner, floating heavily like a thick fog over the hills and valleys. On almost all sides, knolls, hills, and valleys mingled together and rose tier on tier towards the plateaus of upper Périgord, while far away to the south beyond La Vézère the great hills of black Périgord shut off the bluish horizon. About me there would be no sound except sometimes the frightened beating of a bird's wing or a stir in the underbrush, where a fox trotted past, his tail drooping. Far off there would be the faint barking of a dog following the trail of a hare, or the horn of some hunter calling his beagles, or perhaps the pitiful lowing of a cow after her calf which had been given to the Thenon butcher.

Then, when noon came, the Angelus would ring from all the belfries about, Fossemagne, Thenon, Bars, Rouffignac, Saint-Geyrac, Milhac-d'Auberoche, and the music of all these bells of varying depths of tone spread out over the silent forest. I would stay there perched in my tree for hours, dreaming of those vague things that pass through the heads of children, smelling the wild odors that rose from the forest, that vast herbarium of wild plants, warmed by the sun, listening to the cuckoo calling from the depths of the

woods, answered by another whose note came from far away like a faint echo. At other times would come the mew of a jay that had learned during the cherry season to imitate the cats about the house, and that flew off quickly on catching sight of me.

I loved this solitude and half-silence which, without my realizing it, softened the cruel memories of my poor father. Every day, while my mother worked at Marancé, I roamed the woods, eating a meal ball or bit of bread, which I carried in my pocket, stuffing myself with wild fruits, drinking from the little pools of water where the rain had collected—for there are hardly any springs in the forest—and sleeping on the grass when I was tired. Not very far from Las Motras, in a hollow, is the little lake called Le Gour; they say that they have never been able to find its bottom, but perhaps they have never tried very hard. At this time, Le Gour was surrounded by dense underbrush and the water slept there, tranquil and clear, shadowed by the great trees which it reflected,—ashes, beeches, maples and sturdy oaks. There was even a silver aspen leaning over the little lake, come there by chance, the leaves of which shivered with a light rustle like that of an insect's wing. I sometimes went there to lie under the high ferns, and when the sun began to sink and a male turtledove nearby cooed amorously, I watched the birds, thirsty from the heat of the day, which came there to drink. They were of all species—jays, orioles, blackbirds, thrushes, finches, linnets, tomtits, robins, warblers. They came

on the wing, lighting on a branch, turning their heads to right and left; but when they saw there was no danger, they flew down to the edge of Le Gour and sipped the water, tilting their beaks in the air so that it could run down. At times some of them would bathe, flashing their wings like children beating the water in their bath. And afterwards they would shake themselves dry and plume their feathers.

It seemed to me, on whom always weighed, though less heavily now, my father's misfortune,—it seemed to me, I say, that these little creatures, free in the forest, were very fortunate, having no care of any sort, rising and going to roost with the sun, sleeping tranquilly, their little crops well supplied, their heads under their wings. It occurred to me on second thoughts, however, that in winter they were none too well off. When it was freezing hard and the snow was deep, then many of them must have to fast. Blackbirds, thrushes and jays can always find a few juniper berries, but the other poor little birds cannot find any more seeds or insects to pick up, and if the snow lasts and the cold is severe, on nights when it is freezing hard enough to split the stones, weakened by hunger, they must fall dead from the branch and lie there, beak open, feathers ruffled, feet stiff. At other times, a fierce cat climbs the tree in the darkness and carries them off, or a hunter comes with his lantern while they are all asleep, and with a blow of his stick knocks down those that have imprudently

perched too low. Ah! there is misery for everything that lives on earth.

On Sundays my mother stayed at the tile-works, well satisfied to be with me, and occupied herself with patching up our poor garments; they needed it sadly, especially mine, for one can imagine that with such a life in the woods, scrambling through briars, climbing trees, my trousers and my shirts had a rough time of it. On that day she made the soup with something that had been given her, or with some red beans, and it seemed good to eat that way together, each of us having been alone the whole week. Necessity early teaches the children of the poor; when I was alone, if a little bouillon remained I sometimes warmed it up and poured it over the bread, in a small soup dish; but ordinarily I preferred to run about.

With this I ate a piece of bread and garlic, taking sparingly of salt,—as was right, for it was dear,—or else stewed potatoes, some corn meal balls, and then the fruits that grew on the wild trees, sowed by the birds in the woods; cherries, sorb-apples, or even small peaches found in the abandoned orchard at the edge of the forest. Sometimes my mother brought me, in the pocket of her apron, a bit of hasty-pudding, of which she, poor woman, had deprived herself. But she had to hide it, for the man at Marancé, who begrudged even the bread that was eaten, would have been angry had he noticed it. In spite of all, I throve like a tree planted in good soil,

and I grew strong: although I was only eight years old, I looked ten. My understanding also was well formed; I spoke with my mother about things of which children are usually ignorant, and I understood matters above my years: I think that poverty and unhappiness had opened my mind.

There are some who will say:

“Then you lived like the Huguenots! You did not go to mass on Sunday, or to vespers?”

Well no, we did not go. My mother, poor woman, believed firmly in heaven and hell. She knew well that she was damning herself by doing as she did; indeed, she could not fail to do so, for the curé, meeting her one evening when she was on her way home, tired out with her day's work, had reproached her for it, saying that not to go to mass, not to confess, nor to take the Sacrament on Easter, was to live like an outcast. No, she did not go to church, and she said she did not take me because she had not the time. But there was really another reason. If the truth must be told, she had fallen out with the good God: she was angry at him, and especially at the holy Virgin, because my father had been condemned. She quite agreed that he should have been punished, but not by death, for the true culprits, those who had driven him to such a pass, were the Count, who had given the unjust and wicked order to kill our dog, and then that scoundrel of a Laborie, who had pursued her with his dishonorable proposals. I say, punished with

death, for at that time things were not as they are now, when the convicts are better cared for and happier over there on the islands than are the poor folk at home. Those who survived for ten years that life in the galleys had strong frames; the greater part died before that, especially those who were sent to Rochefort, in the marshes of La Charente. And it was precisely there that they had sent my father, at the request of the Comte de Nansac, as M. Fongrave had informed us. At first, when they told us that Rochefort was nearer the tile-works than Brest or Toulon, we were pleased, as if it were not all the same to us whether we were separated by fifty or a hundred or two hundred leagues. But since then I have learned from a sailor from Saint-Léon that it was there they sent those they wished to be rid of.

As for my poor father, he did not last long. Working all day in the mud of the river, fed on bad beans, chained at night to a plank bed, he caught the terrible fevers of the convict ship. And then the loss of his liberty and his grief undermined him more than his illness, so that at the end of a few months the wretched man died, broken-hearted. On All Saints' Eve, the mayor summoned my mother and said to her brutally, before the curé, who was with him in the square before the church:

"Your husband died over there a fortnight ago. You can have some masses said for him."

"The poor do not need them," replied my mother. "They have their hell on this earth."

And she went off.

It was pitch dark when she reached the tile-works, where I was waiting in the chimney-corner, roasting some chestnuts in the ashes for my supper. Without speaking to me, she unwrapped the kerchief from her head, and, tying it up again, turned under the corner that had been pulled in front.

I must explain that formerly there were different ways of dressing the head with the kerchief: young girls let a long end hang behind over the neck, as if they were fishing for a husband; wives, proud to possess a man, brought this end ostentatiously forward over the ear; while the poor widows, desolate in their bereavement, concealed it under their head-dress. After this explanation, it can be understood that the arrangement of this corner of the kerchief in a certain fashion was the emblem of the marriage the girls desired, the wives possessed, and the widows regretted,—all this quite simply and without thought of wrong.

At this time I did not understand what that handkerchief corner signified, and I watched my mother, full of astonishment. When she had finished, she took a *gibe*, a sort of strong pruning-hook on a long handle, and with my hand in hers led me out through the forest.

She walked with rapid steps that made me almost run,—silent, fierce, gripping my hand in hers with a strong, firm pressure. She did not know the forest as well as Mion's husband did, and besides, the idea

that drove her on prevented her from directing her steps properly in the dark; consequently, wishing to go to l'Herm, she went a good deal too far to the right, toward Lac-Nègre. Seeing this and realizing that she had lost her way, my mother turned directly southward. All this time we walked on without a word, I expecting something serious to come out of this long silence, and troubled in advance at the thought of some terrible revelation. In the woods, the leaves, shaken by a damp wind, fell at the foot of the trees; sometimes, lifted by a gust, whirled about in the darkness, they passed over our heads like an innumerable flock of starlings, borne by a gale. In the paths, strewn with dead leaves, pools of water like dark mirrors, in which nothing was reflected, splashed under our sabots. And we kept walking rapidly with great strides, my mother with her bag on her shoulder, dragging me along beside her, both of us enveloped in the sinister darkness of the woods. Finally, about eleven o'clock, we saw the pointed roofs of the Château de l'Herm rising in the black sky at the edge of the forest, and my mother hastened her steps, encircling the slopes to avoid the village. When we came out in the open, we saw that the sky was gray, with great clouds in black bands over it, flying towards the west, driven across by the wind. We reached the moat of the enclosure, which my mother skirted, and, stopping opposite the outer door, her head high, her eyes shining, her skirts whipped by the wind, she said to me:

"My boy, your father is dead over there in the galleys, killed by the master of Nansac. You are going to swear to avenge him! Do as I do."

And following the ancient rite for solemn oaths, used among the peasants of Périgord for untold years, she spat in her right hand, made a cross in the spittle with the first finger of the left, and stretched the open hand out towards the château.

"Vengeance against the Nansacs!" she said three times, in a loud voice. As for me, I followed her, and repeated three times:

"Vengeance against the Nansacs!"

That done (while the big dogs were howling in the kennels), skirting the houses and the sleeping village, we made for the old royal highway that passes close by l'Herm and crosses the woods, going towards Thenon. Three-quarters of an hour later, we were at Croix-de-Ruchard, which is now on the edge of the forest, and leaving La Salvetat on the right, we reëntered the wood of La Granval, following the paths, in order to return to the tile-works, where we arrived about two o'clock in the morning.

At the age at which I then was, sleep was almost as much of a necessity as food and drink. When I awoke the next morning, it was broad daylight, and I was alone in the bed, my mother having left early for work. I stayed there a moment watching at the other end of our hovel a fine rain that was falling through the crumbling tile-works, making a puddle on

the ground. I thought of all the misfortunes that had befallen us. Although the death of my father was a great blow to me, it had not been a surprise, for my mother and I had both expected it. We often spoke together about what that hell of the galleys must be like, and we imagined things so terrible and at the same time so true that death could be thought of only as a deliverance. Think of being reduced to choosing death for those we love! How tragic! And what a fierce hatred stirred in me against the Nansacs, who were to me like one of those nests of twisted vipers which I sometimes found in the forest!

It was a relief after these sad thoughts to have in my heart that strong feeling of gratitude towards M. Fongrave, who had been so good to us. As long as we did not in some way show this gratitude towards my father's lawyer, I felt I should not be easy in my mind. As I tried to think of something we could do, it occurred to me that it would be a good idea to send him a hare. Then I remembered that in the drawer of the cabinet there were some snares, or strands of brass wire, which my father used to use. I jumped hastily out of bed, and put on my trousers, which were held up by a piece of string I had made out of hemp. I went to the drawer, and was delighted to find a dozen snares. Without waiting longer I took up a *mique* and went off, eating it, to look for the hares' runways, where I could set the snares. After hunting carefully about, I noticed three tracks that were fairly well-frequented, and that evening, having

set three of the snares, I hid them in a handful of ferns and when the sun was sinking went out to place them. The first I put in the passage, two steps from the runway, and attached it to a strong oak shoot. Another I set on the edge of the wood, at a spot where I knew the hares often passed on their way to spend the night in the fields about the villages. And the third I placed at the crossing of two little runways, which seemed to be a good post for people hunting with dogs.

Very early the next morning, I went off to see my snares, but there was nothing in them. The day after, still nothing! The third day I found I had lost a snare, carried off doubtless by some warden; in the other traps there was nothing as yet. I realized now that I was not a very clever poacher, but for all that I was not at all discouraged. And in this I was justified, for on the fourth day, as I approached my last snare, I saw something gray on the tiny path. I started to run towards it. And behold, there was a fine hare, stretched out dead, the skin still damp from the night's dew. I picked it up and raced home. That evening, when my mother came, I showed her the hare, telling her that I had caught it for M. Fongrave. She said that that was admirable, we must never forget those who had been good to us, or those who had done us harm either.

There was no danger of my forgetting that; but what could I do, I, a boy of eight? How could I take vengeance for my father's death on these Nansac

gentry? They were rich and powerful; the land belonged to them; they had a château which could not be entered against their will; servants, armed guards. And I was poor and despised. I thought this over often, without being able to imagine any means,—a proof that my character was not naturally disposed to evil. On the following Tuesday, as I was going to Thenon with my mother, to try to send the hare to M. Fongrave, we came across a man who was carrying a gun by a strap and leading by a cord a poor beagle whose neck was all flayed. As we walked we talked, and among other things the man told us that his dog had been caught in a snare, but that fortunately, as he was close by cutting heather, he had heard it yelping and had pulled it out of the trap, half strangled. On hearing this, it occurred to me that the Comte de Nansac often hunted in the forest, and that I could kill his dogs by this same means. And the thought made me happy.

At Thenon my mother found a merchant from Périgueux, with a shop on the Place de la Clautre, who often came to the markets on Tuesday with two pack-mules carrying his goods. This man said he knew M. Fongrave, who had pleaded a case for him, and he promised surely to deliver the hare to him the next day. On the strength of this assurance, we returned to the tile-works. In order not to meet the gentlefolk of Nansac, out hunting, or their guards, I seldom went into the forest of l'Herm, which belonged to them. But one evening, having found some

favorable spots, I placed my snares, doubled and well-fastened to strong oak saplings, and came running home. The next day was hunting day, and from far off I heard at times the horn of the head huntsman and the baying of dogs. Of what had happened that day I knew nothing, and I was furious when the next day, in the forest of La Granval just between Maurezies and Lac-Viel, I met the head huntsman of l'Herm, who was blowing his horn. He asked me if I had not seen a big black and white dog, marked with yellow on the feet and above the eyes. I answered, no, and he went off, spurring his horse. In the villages about the forest word went about that Taiaut, the leader of the pack, was lost. I said nothing, but I suspected that he might be lying dead, strangled, at the foot of a little oak, over there in the Combe-du-Loup. I had a strong desire to make sure, but the fear of being discovered and of drawing suspicion on myself, restrained me. Losing patience, however, on Sunday at the hour of mass, when I was sure that everyone, masters and servants alike, would be in church, I ran to the Combe-du-Loup. Aha! There was the head of Taiaut on the ground in the path; all the rest of him had disappeared, eaten by the wolves. He had paid for that dog of ours.

I quickly undid the snare and came away, proud and pleased with the beginning of our vengeance. At the château no one suspected anything, and when, a few days later, Mascret found the head of Taiaut half eaten by ants, they thought the dog, which had not

come back with the others, must have been caught at night by the wolves.

I said I was pleased: one thing, however, troubled me. It was that the Count did not know that it was I who had done the deed. Some fine day, I thought, I will tell him; but now it is too dangerous. The death of my father had not appeased him; on the contrary, he still tried to do us harm, to take the bread out of our mouths, and drive us out of the country. First, he tried to buy the tile-works where we lived. But the man who owned it, like everyone in the neighborhood, had little love for him, and refused to sell. Not having succeeded in this, he conceived the idea of having the son of Tapy, over there where my mother was working, brought back: the latter had had enough of the hardships of the regiment, although he had enlisted voluntarily. The Count managed it so well that he was dismissed, on what pretext I do not know; but in those days such noblemen as he could do anything they wished.

Here, then, was my mother again without work, and wondering where she was to get her daily bread. Just at this juncture, as if in response to the Count's wickedness, another of his dogs was caught in a snare; but this time it was found, and Mascret said:

"If Martissou were not dead in the galleys, I would swear that it was he who placed that trap!"

But for the moment that suspicion went no further; they believed the dog had got himself caught in a trap set for hares, as occasionally happens.

A fortnight later, however, Mascret, who had his own idea about it, finding me in the forest, drew the wire out of his game-bag, and said to me:

“Do you recognize that?”

Rage at all the shameful deeds of the Count rose in me all at once.

“Yes, well!” I said. “It was I who set it!”

“Ah! you cursed, wicked rascal! I’ll teach you!”

But, jumping back, I, at the same instant, opened my knife, ready to plant it in the guard’s abdomen:

“Come on! If you are not a coward!”

When Mascret saw me thus, my brows knit, my eyes blazing, my mouth running, showing my teeth like a young wolf about to bite, he was frightened, and with many threats went off.

However, winter had come; the finches were assembling in great flocks, the tomtits left the woods for the gardens, the thrushes came down into the fields, and the robins gathered about the houses. That is the season when one rakes the leaves in the chestnut groves, cleans out the furrows in the fields, picks up the acorns, and does other small chores like that, by which people pass the time: there was no work for day laborers these days. Seeing, therefore, that she would be without work otherwise, my mother, who was a good spinner, sought here and there for hemp to spin, and found a little. She put a dry, raw chestnut in her mouth to make saliva, and in this way spun from morning till night, earning scarcely three sous

a day: it was not enough to buy us the bread we needed. Fortunately, the man to whom the tile-works belonged had given us permission to gather chestnuts on shares, so that we had about two sacks full on the heather at the bottom of the chest, enough to assure our not dying of hunger that winter. As for wood, we had plenty of it: we had heaped up a great pile for the bad season, under the end of the shed, part of which was still weather-proof. This was very fortunate when the snow came and we had to spend whole days in the chimney-corner. To amuse myself, while my mother spun unceasingly, I tried to make birdcages, my only instruments being my knife and a small iron pin which I heated red-hot in order to pierce the holes in the bars.

Winter, they say, is the good season for the rich, but with the poor it is otherwise. For them, however, there is no good season. Those who have to earn their living are still more miserable when there is no work in the fields: thus it is with the poor hirelings in the country,—they have to go without work when it rains or snows, and often go without food as well. Besides, winter is the time when one ought to be clothed in good, stout fustian, or in good, rough, woolen drugget to keep the cold off; but poor folks are obliged to pass the months of frost in their summer garments. As for us, in this hovel, where the rain and the snow fell through the holes of the tile-works and the wind too rushed in, sometimes putting out the lantern that hung from the chimneypiece, we

were far from well off, as one may believe; especially as our clothes, always the same, worn and ragged, were anything but warm. So, when spring came, when the wild nut-trees put out their buds, and the box-trees began to form their little buttons, it was as if we were reborn with the sun. But that was not everything; he had to eat, and in order to eat, we had to earn money.

What makes trouble for some is often the good fortune of others. Towards mid-Lent Tapy's wife fell ill, so her husband asked my mother to go there and take care of her and the children, and look after the house. The poor woman was in bed six weeks, and as soon as she could get up, although she was quite feeble, she had to resume her work. For Tapy was a little stingy, even miserly; to be obliged to pay a woman to do the housework while he had a woman of his own, went against his grain, however little he paid the stranger. So he was angry at his wife for being ill, though it was not her fault, poor soul!

And again my mother was out of work. At the end of a month and a half the few sous she had made were all spent. The day came when we had neither bread nor potatoes left. The chestnuts had been finished long before; there was no more fat, and we made our soup, such as it was, with a bit of rancid oil. Only, at the bottom of the sack, a little corn meal remained. My mother kneaded it and made some *miques*, which she cooked, saying:

"When these are finished, we shall have to go and beg for our bread."

When I heard that, I cursed the Comte de Nansac, who had caused my father's death in the galleys and wished to make us die of wretchedness. I repeated to myself what I had often heard my mother say:

"The good God is not just when he permits that!"

If I had had my father's gun, which they had kept at the court, I think I should have lain in wait in the forest to slay this wicked nobleman, like a wolf, when he passed on horseback with his dogs, crying out, in his cold, disdainful way, when he met a peasant on the road:

"Out of my way, clodhopper!"

As I pondered all these painful things, confused by my misery, it occurred to me that we were on the eve of the feast of Saint John. In our part of the country it is the custom to light a fire on that day at the crossroads and near the villages and the isolated houses. In the towns they prepare a fire covered with greens and leaves, with a bunch of lilies and roses and Saint John's wort at the top, which later on are pulled off. Just as the Druids, in former times, celebrated the festival of the solstice, so the curé came at nightfall to bless the fire with a rite; at least this is what the curé of Fanlac did, from whom I learned about it. When the fire was nearly out, those who had not been able to get some of the flowers jumped over the flames to ward off boils and carried off the embers to protect their houses from lightning.

At the time when we were living at Combenègre, from which I could see the hills and slopes stretching far away in the distance, I loved to watch the innumerable fires on that evening. Over an immense reach of country they shone in the darkness, to the very edge of the horizon, where the uncertain wavering of the flame almost disappeared, like a star lost in the depths of the sky. On the hilltops the fires would burn down and go out sometimes for a moment, only to be revived by the wind and fling up a few more flames before being finally extinguished; while others, in the vigor of their first blazing, mounted in the black sky like tongues of flame.

From the tile-works in the middle of the wood we could not see all these fires, but I did not bother about that, for just as I had thought of them, like a shot an idea had come into my head. This idea was to set fire to the forest of l'Herm! From that moment I thought of nothing else; at night I dreamed of it. The idea was not the perverse resolve of a child, who took pleasure in returning evil for evil. No. To the pitiless warfare of the Count I was replying with a similar warfare. Not being able to kill him—as I would have done without remorse—I would inflict grave damage on him. I would be keeping my oath, avenging my father. This thought pleased me. At the time these things were not as clear in my mind as they seem now in my telling, but I felt them all the same.

The problem was how to accomplish this. All day

I dreamed over it, searching for methods, weighing them, comparing them, and finally deciding on the best, that is to say, those that would make the conflagration bigger.

The first point I had to consider was the necessity of waiting for a day when there was a high wind; the second, that the wind must come from the east, from the direction of Bars, so as not to burn the forest of La Granval or that of Lac-Gendre—a deed I would not have done for anything in the world—but only that of l'Herm. The third condition was that I must light the fire in some spot from which it could easily spread to all the woods belonging to the Comte de Nansac, for if I made several fireplaces, I should arouse suspicion. Made in only one place, on the other hand, it could pass for an accident. The fourth point, finally, was that the fire must be started at night, in order to prevent help from arriving and putting it out at the very beginning.

For a child of my age, all this planning was not very unskillful. The unfortunate thing is that it was done in a bad cause. But I was driven to evil and was not the only one to blame.

While I was going over all this in my mind, my mother, who had heard that they required haymakers at Cheylard, went there the next day, leaving me alone for the whole of the long haying season; for it was too far to return each evening. This distressed her, but I reassured her that I did not at all mind being left alone. If I had told her the truth, I should have said

I was pleased. The first day I went with her as far as Cheylard, where she asked for a little of her money in advance and bought from the baker of Rouffignac a loaf of bread, which I carried home with me.

Since I had decided definitely on my plan, I had only to find the right place and await the favorable moment. Between the timber in the forest of l'Herm and that in La Granval which adjoined it, there was a difference of three or four years' growth. The former would be ready to cut the next winter, so that its boundaries were easy to find, especially with the rough corner landmarks which occurred every little distance. Having carefully considered everything, I decided on a spot where a corner of the woods of l'Herm joined the others. Just at that spot there was an old ditch, half filled up; I dug a little fireplace in the side, such as children make to amuse themselves, and collected some armfuls of underbrush in the ditch. Then I returned without seeing anyone whatsoever.

I waited several days. There was a hot sun which dried the twigs and grasses in the wood; this delighted me and made me hope for a fine, blazing fire. But there was no wind. One morning, however, the weather changed with the moon, and, to my great satisfaction, a strong east wind began to blow. All day long I fidgeted with impatience, and when night had come I filled an old sabot with embers and ashes and, hiding it under my shirt, I ran through the woods.

Gray clouds were going by in the sky, the weather

was stormy, a warm wind was blowing through the coppice, bending the ferns and forest grass, and swaying noisily the tops of the staddles and the tall forest trees. So, while I was running, I kept saying to myself, "If only it doesn't rain to-night!"

When I reached the spot I was out of breath and covered with sweat. It must have been about ten o'clock. I found my fireplace by feeling about, and at once emptied my sabot into it, covered it with dry grass and began to blow on the embers. The grass blazed quickly; I added a few sticks to it, and, as the fire caught, some fragments of dead branches. After it was well started, I threw on an armful of dry brush which I had collected, and the flame instantly mounted up and the woods caught. In a moment, owing to the force of the wind, the underbrush was on fire, and I ran off as I had come, through the thickets, carrying the sabot, which would have betrayed me.

Reaching the tile-works, with hands bleeding and legs torn by the brambles, I went to bed in my clothes, agitated and restless, afraid of only one thing, that the fire would go out of itself, or be put out by the thunderstorm which was rumbling far away. About an hour after midnight I heard loud noises, and, getting up, I went out. The tocsin was sounding from the belfries of the neighborhood with hurried, sinister tollings. An immense red glow reddened the clouds that were flying past borne by the wind, and lighted up the slopes. An uproar rose from the villages

neighboring the forest,—l'Herm, Prisse, Les Foucaudies, La Lande. And in the midst of the woods were to be heard the calls of the men from Maurezies, La Cabane, Lac-Viel, La Granval, who were running to bring aid.

Thereupon, I was seized with an immense desire to see my handiwork. I let these men go past me, and then cut through the cleared woods and reached one of the highest spots in the forest, where there was a great beech which I had climbed more than once. Grasping it quickly, I set to work climbing. The higher I climbed the more I saw of the fire, and when I reached the top, the conflagration could be seen in its whole extent. The forest of l'Herm was burning over an area of half a league, and seemed like a great lake of fire. The underbrush, dried by the heat, flamed up in great shoots; the big trees, isolated in the midst of the fire, resisted longer, but at last, enveloped in flames, their base undermined, they fell with an immense crash into the enormous furnace, where they disappeared, sending up clouds of sparks. The smoke, driven by the wind, uncovered this wave of fire, which came rapidly on, devouring everything in its passage. The birds, rudely awakened, rose in the air, and, not knowing where to go, flew about terrified, over this gigantic hearth. Above the heavy roaring of the fire rose into the night the hissing of green wood twisting in the flame, the cracking of trees fallen into the heap of blazing embers, the voices of distracted men working to save their fields of ripe

wheat. In the clearings the tongues of flame stretched out like immense serpents, and only stopped at the edge of the woods. On the doorsteps of the houses roundabout, children in their nightgowns were calmly watching the burning of the Comte de Nansac's forest. The glare of the great fire was thrown far off on the hillsides, and lighted up the villages with sinister tints of red that were reflected from the blazing sky. Nearer, above the low houses of the village, the towers and great gables of the Château de l'Herm rose in a somber mass, the windows shining with the reflected glare.

I remained there astride a big limb until daybreak, following the progress of the fire, which, except for a few corners that were kept safe at the end of a road, did not cease until it had devoured the entire forest, leaving behind it a vast black expanse from which arose clouds of smoke. Then, quite satisfied with my vengeance, I came down from my tree and returned to the tile-works, full of a savage joy.

Thanks to my little fireplace, people thought the fire had been started by children at play. Everybody in the neighborhood was questioned in turn without avail. The Comte de Nansac had lost six or seven hundred acres of burned wood.

From that time on, it seemed to me that I was a man. I was drunk with the pride of my wicked act. I measured my strength by its extent, and found delight in my feeling of satisfied hatred. Of remorse I had not a shadow, any more than has the wild boar

that turns on the hunter, or the viper that bites the foot of a peasant. On the contrary, the success of my scheme tempted me to think of avenging myself more completely.

On Sunday, when my mother came to spend the day at the tile-works, she asked me if I had not been frightened the night of the fire. I answered, no; on the contrary, I had been overjoyed to see the Count's woods burning. The expression with which I said this caused her to look at me with quick suspicion, and then, as she suddenly comprehended, she grasped me, clutching me to her heart and embracing me fiercely:

"Ah!" she said, as she put me down; "he will never be punished enough!"

Three or four days later, since the haymaking was finished, the poor woman came back in the evening, worn out with fatigue, after having worked a whole long day of fifteen hours under a blazing sun. She hurried fast in order to reach home before the storm which was following her, but her effort was useless. Shortly after she had passed La Salvetat, the clouds burst with a great crash. All panting and covered with sweat, she was deluged with a cold rain that was partly hail. Three-quarters of an hour later, when she arrived in this beating rain, she was drenched to the skin, shivering and quite exhausted. Having no change of clothes, she went to bed, and I did likewise. All night I felt her beside me, burning and restless with fever, and tormented in her sleep with bad dreams

which made her talk nonsense in a sort of delirium. In the morning she wished to get up, as she was a brave woman, but when she had put the pot on the fire to cook some potatoes, she had to go back to bed, for she was seized with chills and violent chatterings of her teeth, and complained of great pain in the side.

Seeing her in this condition, I covered her with everything I could find,—her dried skirt and finally my own shirt, but she still shivered. Then I thought of going for help, but when I spoke of it, she said feebly:

“Do not leave me, my Jacquou!”

As one can imagine, I was very anxious. Since I did not know how to appease the thirst which tormented her, I cut in quarters the anis apples which the poor woman had brought in the pocket of her apron. I boiled them and made a sort of beverage, which I gave her, when she asked, as she often did, for something to drink. Sometimes I said to myself that if she could get to sleep, I would run as far as Granges and get aid. But when I made the least movement, she opened her eyes and said:

“You are there, my Jacquou? Do not leave me.”

And I answered, taking her hand:

“Don’t be afraid, mother! I will not leave you.”

Then, worn out with the fever, breathing with much difficulty, she would close her eyes.

When she was a little more at ease, I went to the door and looked out to see if anyone were passing

by. But in this wild spot where no one had occasion to go, and which was not on any road, one almost never saw anybody save, at long intervals, some poor fellow skirting the borders of the wood, with his pruning-bill under his jacket or vest, going to get his load of wood in the thicket. As no one was in sight, I came back very much disturbed, and when my mother woke up I tried to make her understand that she must have patience and remain alone for a couple of hours while I went to get somebody. But to everything I could say she would only answer:

“Do not leave me, my Jacquou!”

Or else, not having the strength to speak, she would shake her head to indicate “no.”

The next night she began to be delirious, speaking of the guillotine and the galleys, calling for her poor husband, dead over there on a bare plank, with his feet in chains. The memory of all our misfortune came back to her and drove her frantic. She cried out against the Comte de Nansac, and railed against the Virgin Mary for not saving her husband. In her fever, she beat her arms upon the quilt to chase away the executioner whom she said she saw at the foot of the bed, or tried to get up to join her Martissou, who was waiting for her. I had great difficulty in calming her a little. I had to climb on the bed, put my arms about her neck and speak to her as to a little child, while I embraced her. In the morning, exhausted with weariness, she dozed a little, and seeing her thus I thought she was getting better. But when

she woke with a start and a long moan, I saw that she was not. Her breathing became more and more rapid and painful, her fever was so high that her hand burned mine. In this way the day passed, and when night came she could no longer speak, but moaned and tossed despairingly. Oh! what a night! Imagine a child of nine alone in a solitary, abandoned hut in the midst of the forest, with his mother in her last agony! For several hours the poor, unhappy woman fought death, beating her arms crazily, trying to pull off the bed covering, lifting herself up bodily in the throes of the fever, her eyes wild, her breast panting; she would fall back on the bed, as her breath would fail her for an instant, only to be recovered with a painful effort. Towards midnight or one o'clock the fever ceased, and a hoarse sound came from her chest,—the death rattle. That lasted for half an hour. I crouched on the bench near the bed and held my poor mother's hand tight against my breast. At that moment she became entirely conscious again. She turned towards me, her eyes full of an agonized despair, and two big tears ran down her thin, sunburned cheeks; then her lips moved, the rattle stopped,—she was dead.

Full of grief and terror, I called her: "Mother! Mother!" and began to sob on her hand, which I still held in mine.

I stayed there a long time, motionless, prostrate. When I lifted my head, I saw, by the light of the lantern which the wind, as it came through the hole

in the roof, set flickering, my mother's face which was taking on the color of yellow wax. Her eyes and mouth remained open, and the lips, drawn back, revealed her teeth. Oh, with what fearful terror I was seized when I saw her like this! I could not look at her for a single moment, and, hiding my face in the sheets, filled with fear and despair, I managed somehow to pass this terrible night.

When day came, I raised myself up, a little reassured, and looked at my poor mother. Now she was cold, and rigid in death. Her hand, which I touched, froze mine; her black hair, loosened by her feverish tossings, spread out in thick locks over the bed, like serpents, her pallor had become terrifying, her eyes were glassy and dull, and her mouth, still wide open, seemed to shriek her despair at leaving her child alone in the world.

I remained there a moment, contemplating her. Then, acting as I heard people did in such cases, I covered her face with the winding sheet, and closing the door, went off to find someone. At Petit-Lac, a woman who was spinning as she leaned against a wall, saw me go by in this distress, and asked me what was the matter. When I told her, she raised her arms, and said:

"Holy Virgin!"

Then she asked me a great many questions, and ended by saying:

"Ah! So you are the child of the late Martissou!"

And that was all. As she made no offer of assist-

ance, I left her and went straight to Bars to the mayor, who recognized me at once.

"And what do you want?" he said, roughly, in his usual fashion.

When I had told him of the death of my mother, he made an ill-humored gesture, grumbled a few words between his teeth, and finished by answering me in a loud voice:

"You can go back. We will do what is necessary."

I went back to the tile-works, and sat waiting beside the door the whole day. About five o'clock, four men came with a kind of litter with sides, a sort of long box with shafts, which was used to carry to the grave the poor who could not afford a coffin,—a common thing in those days. When they came in, one of them uncovered the face of my mother and said:

"Poor woman! She was too young to die!"

Seeing that she was not laid out or in her shroud, they left her in the sheets and turned them down over her. Then, placing her in the old bed-spread, all worn and patched with various remnants, and arranging her body carefully in it, they fastened the sheets above the head and at the feet. When that was done, they took this poor, stiff corpse and placed it in the litter. Then each man took one of the four handles, and they went out of the house and set off through the forest.

The day had been hot. The setting sun sent its rays through the undergrowth like straws of gold. The birds were beginning to roost for the night, and

flew about among the branches. It was stifling in these airless woods, and the roads were bad; so that the tired men who carried her body often stopped and wiped their foreheads with their sleeves. Then, rested, they spat in their hands, gripped the shafts, and set off again.

I followed them mechanically, stopping when they stopped, and setting off again with them. I was lost in grief, and thought of nothing, as with a stony gaze I followed my mother's body, folded in the quilt, which was being gradually shaken loose by the unevenness of the ground, and around which big, black flies were beginning to buzz. . . .

When we came out of the forest, and the roads were open and more level, the men could carry her uninterruptedly on their shoulders, and they quickened their steps. As we passed by a village, a poor old woman who had come to get her bread, as was evident from the half-full haversack she carried under her crooked chin, crossed herself, and said:

"It's a great pity to see a poor creature carried to her grave like that!"

And pulling her rosary from her pocket, she followed along with me.

The Ave Maria was ringing as we reached the little town of Bars. The men placed the litter in front of the church door, and went to fetch the curé. A moment later he arrived, cast a cold glance at the body, and said:

"This woman did not attend church, or take com-

munion on Easter; she denied God and the Holy Virgin; she was a Huguenot; there are no prayers for her. . . . You can carry her to the corner of the cemetery where the grave is dug."

The men stood still a moment, astounded; then, taking up their burden, they entered the cemetery, while the old woman said to me:

"If you had been able to pay, he would have said the burial service just the same. . . . Jesus, my God!"

In a corner of the cemetery, full of stones, brambles and nettles, the hole was ready, and the man who had dug it was waiting. The bearers placed the body on the inclined board and let it slip down as gently as they could. Then they pulled out the board little by little, and my poor mother lay at the bottom of the black hole. She was hardly stretched out there when the grave-digger began to throw in the earth and stones, which fell on her with a dull noise.

Meanwhile, night had come, and, drowned in my grief, I stood watching like one out of his mind while the grave was being filled. By my side, the old woman on her knees was telling her beads. When the man had finished, she rose, made the sign of the cross, and, touching my arm, said:

"Come, my child, it is all over."

And I followed her to the village, where she had shelter in a barn. She made me go up with her. Worn out with grief and fatigue, I fell on the hay, and dropped into a heavy slumber.

CHAPTER IV

WHEN I awoke next morning, I was astonished to find myself in a hayloft; but soon my memory returned. I looked about me; the old woman was gone, but, suspecting that I would be hungry, she had left me a good-sized piece of bread. My stomach clamored for it, as it must have been a couple of days since I had eaten anything. Although the bread was all wheat and looked very clean, I felt, nevertheless, a great unwillingness to touch it. Among us, however poor people may be, they have a horror of the bread of charity. It is a popular saying that "A beggar's pack, cleverly borne, supports its owner." But in spite of that, the humblest peasant in the blackest poverty still thinks himself fortunate if he has not been driven to this, and regards with a rather scornful compassion those who seek their living by beggary.

Remembering the old woman's kind thought, however, I felt I should be an ingrate if I refused this bit of bread. Besides, I was starving, and that is a terrible thing to be. So I took the bread, and came down from the hayloft. In the court I saw no one, and the door of the house was closed, so, eating my bread, I went off.

I went back to the tile-works; but when I saw the deserted hovel and that bedstead on which remained nothing but the straw mattress and wretched feather bed, I sat down on the bench and began to cry, as I thought of my mother over there, crushed under six feet of earth, and of myself all alone in the world. Having wept my heart out for the last time, I decided to go away. But first, as I did not wish to leave my dear, dead mother's wretched clothes lying about, I burned everything in the fireplace. When that was done, I slipped the cord of the haversack over my shoulder, took my father's thorn stick, and, having cast a last glance at the bed, where I still seemed to see the poor stiff body that was no longer there, I came away from the hut, leaving our miserable possessions behind.

My idea was to hire myself out as a turkey-keeper, and I thought first of Mïon of Puymaigre,—not that I wished them to employ me—for nothing on earth would have made me willing to stay on the lands of the Comte de Nansac—but only to learn from them of some position.

When I reached Puymaigre, I was astonished to find a new farmer's wife, who told me that Mïon and her husband had gone to another farm over by Tursac, or rather, correcting herself, by Cendrieux; she was not quite sure. I saw at once that the poor woman was not very clever, for Tursac is on the Vézère towards the south at a place where the river makes a great turn, as the name indicates,—while

Cendrieux is to the west. So I left her, going back into the forest; and as I walked along, I happened to think of Jean the charcoal-burner who had helped to conceal my father. I had heard that he was in the neighborhood of Vergt, where he had taken charge of an oven; but to make certain, I went to Maurezies, where he owned a small house. When I reached there, they told me that Jean had finished at Vergt, and was for the present in the forest of Bessède, beyond Belvès. When I learned that, I thanked the people, and went off at random, seeking well-to-do houses, for the poor do not have large flocks of turkeys to be watched.

Those whom I met on the roads and in the villages, I asked where I could find work, but the first people to whom I applied could tell me nothing of any use. When they were women—for women are all inquisitive, just like some men—they asked me what house I was from, and when I frankly told them the truth, I realized that it did not dispose them favorably towards me. The son of that Martissou the Croquant, who had killed Laborie and died in the galleys, made a bad impression on them. Although they well knew that he was not a rascal, there were doubtless some among them who repeated to themselves the proverb, "His breed gives the dog speed." Seeing this, it occurred to me to give another name; so, when I was at Foucaudies, and the unavoidable question came up, "Who are your people?" I answered boldly:

"The Garrigals of La Jugie."

"And where's that place, La Jugie?"

"In the parish of Lachapelle d'Albarel."

As this was not in their locality, these people did not know of any such place as La Jugie; and, for that matter, it would have been difficult for them to know of it, for, as I found two or three days later, there was no such place in the commune of Lachapelle.

It looked as if concealing my name brought me good luck, for a woman said to me:

"You might go to look at L'Auzelie, and after that try La Taleyrandie."

I had pointed out to me the road to L'Auzelie, but when I arrived there, I was told that all the little turkeys had died, just as their combs were turning red, having been caught in a thunderstorm.

From there I went to La Taleyrandie, and offered my services to the cook, a stout, kindly woman.

"My poor boy," she said, "you have come too late; they have already hired someone."

I thanked her and was going away when she called after me to wait; a moment later, she brought me a big piece of bread on which she had crushed some beans.

I was not wholly conquered by "la Marane," or ill-luck, so I flushed and told her that I was not asking for charity.

"And I am not giving it to you out of charity," she said, "but because I have a boy of your own age. . . . Come, take it, do!" she added, seeing me hesitate.

I took the piece of bread, thanked the cook heartily,

and went on straight ahead without knowing just where I was going.

Towards evening, I began to wonder where I would get shelter for the night. Ahead of me on a nearby slope was a village, the window panes of which blazed in the setting sun. But to go and ask shelter there was like asking for food: it made me shudder. The night before, however, I had slept in a barn like a beggar, though I had let an old woman take me there not knowing what I was about. It was fine weather and warm, so that I did not worry very much over it and continued my journey. Night overtook me near La Pinsonnie, when I noticed in an abandoned vineyard one of those round huts with roofs of pointed stone, and went straight to it. Inside the little cabin was some heather and dried fern,—a proof that people came there to watch. On this couch I arranged myself and fell asleep.

In the morning, at daybreak, I set off again, and walked about aimlessly for a long time, applying for work at the big houses, but without success. That day I did not eat, for I was ashamed to beg. When night came I lay down to sleep at the foot of a chestnut tree, in a heap of cut heather. I did not fall asleep at once, for I was beginning to worry at not finding work, and I wondered what would become of me if things went on like this. But finally, in spite of this uneasiness and the rumblings of my stomach, I closed my eyes.

The rising sun woke me, and I set off walking

again, but I was so fearfully hungry that when I passed through a village called La Suzardie, and saw a kind-faced woman on her doorstep, I overcame my shame, and with downcast eyes asked for charity from her, "for the love of God," as the custom was. The woman went to get me a piece of bread, which was as black and hard as any I have ever seen, but in spite of that I began to eat it at once, as if I were starving—as indeed I was. Then when she had questioned me, as she had good reason to, and heard my replies, she pointed out to me the road to the Château d'Auberoche, quite close to Fanlac, where perhaps they would take me. But when I reached Auberoche, the head steward without any explanation told me that he had no need of me.

I began to believe that some sorcerer had cast the evil eye upon me; but what could I do? I set off again, climbing the rough, bare slope, at the foot of which is the château, and turned towards Fanlac.

As I climbed the steep, rocky road, bordered with walls of sharp stone, I reflected sadly on my situation. During the three days that I had been roaming the countryside, I had seen children of my own age in the houses of middle-class people and of peasants, and I thought how happy were those who had their parents with them, a home to live in, and everything they wished for, or at least everything necessary. It was not a mean envy working in me, but when I compared my fate with theirs, I felt more keenly my own isola-

tion and my total lack of everything. All the same, I tried to pluck up courage as I followed this toilsome road, borne up by hope. The sun was very hot, and fell full on my tanned face; it was hot enough to put the lizards to sleep, and the stones burned my bare feet. So, by the time I had reached the crest of the high, rocky slope where the little town of Fanlac lies, I was worn out, and I sat down to rest in the shadow of the old church.

I had reached a height overlooking the country, and it seemed to me that my troubles had grown lighter. That was because the more we climb, the more our spirits rise; we comprehend better the totality of things in that sordid world where so many miseries resemble our own; and we become resigned. And then one breathes better on high summits. At that moment, the shade and the repose, with the pure air, gave me a feeling of well-being which made me languid. The little town was almost deserted, as nearly everyone was in the fields cutting the wheat. On all sides the intoxicated grasshoppers ground out their deafening song, always repeated. About the belfry, in a sky of deep blue, the swallows circled, with little shrill cries. A faint echo of the songs of the haymakers rose from the plain and mingled with the voices of the little creatures of the air. On the little square in front of the church, at the foot of an ancient cross, a cock was scratching in the dirt and calling his hens to share a worm with them. I watched it all mechanically, with eyes half-closed,

lulled by the sounds which enveloped me, and languid from lack of food. While I was there, dreaming vaguely about the fate that awaited me, the noon Angelus rang in the belfry, sending its clear peal far off over the sun-baked country and setting in vibration the massive wall against which I was leaning. Then the bell was silent, and the curé came out of the church, where he had doubtless been taking the place of his sacristan who was busy with the harvest. On seeing me, he stopped and said in a loud but kind voice:

“What are you doing there, little fellow?”

I had risen, and as I told him the main facts of my story, he watched me with an air of compassion. I was a fit subject for pity, for since I had been dragging my clothes about the country, they were in tatters. My torn breeches showed my bare skin; they were all frayed, and came scarcely to my knees, held up in some sort of way by a wooden peg like a button. My jacket was in the same state, torn everywhere, and my shirt was dirty, much worn, and all in holes. My bare, dusty feet were scratched by brambles, and so were my legs. I was bare-headed also, but at this time I had a thick crop of hair which protected me from sun and rain. The more the curé examined me, the more I saw a great pity well up in his brown eyes. He was a tall, strong man, with black hair turning gray, a square forehead, and cheeks blackened by a rough beard two days old. His large, straight, fleshy nose divided a thin face, and his prominent chin, cleft in the middle, helped to give him a hard look

which frightened me a little. But his eyes, which reflected the goodness of his heart, reassured me.

When I had finished speaking, the curé said:

"Come with me."

Close to the church stood the parsonage, its gate opening on the little square. Nearby was an old well, its edges worn by the ropes used for drawing water. Though I had come in behind the curé, his servant, who was just pouring the soup on the bread, cried out: "Hey, what are you bringing in there?"

"Just as you see, a poor, ragged child, who has lost his father and mother."

"But I know he has lice."

I shook my head, and this gesture brought to the lips of the curé the faint semblance of a smile, as he replied to his maid:

"My poor Fantille, if he has any, we will take them off of him: the most urgent thing is to give him something to eat, for I think he has not lived any too well for some time."

At that, he took from the dresser a plate of flowered earthenware, and a pewter spoon, and then filled the plate with good cabbage soup.

"Come and eat," he said.

While I was eating eagerly, standing at the end of the table, the curé watched me with pleasure, and when I had finished he took a jug which Fantille had filled, and poured me out a good measure.

"You can certainly eat another spoonful," he said,

when I had finished drinking; and he pointed to the soup.

For decency's sake, I dared not say yes, but he knew what I meant, and once more filled up my plate, after which he went into the next room, where the servant carried him the soup tureen.

A quarter of an hour later, when he had finished lunch, the curé called me in.

"So you are from La Jugie, in the commune of Lachapelle-d'Albarel?" he asked, unrolling a map.

"Yes, Monsieur le curé."

He hunted for a moment, then said to me in a grave voice:

"You are lying, my boy."

I grew red and hung my head.

"Come, tell me the truth; who are you and where do you come from?"

Then, won over by his kindness, I told him all my misfortunes, the death of my father in the galleys, and of my mother at the tile-works only four days before. While I was speaking, explaining what had happened, my hatred for the Comte de Nansac showed so plainly in my words that he asked me:

"So you would avenge yourself if you could?"

"Oh, yes," I answered, with shining eyes.

An idea came to him.

"Perhaps you have already done so?" he asked, looking at me fixedly.

"Yes, Monsieur le curé. . . ."

And on the spot, overwhelmed with my need of

confiding in him, I told him all that I had done,—the strangling of the dogs and the burning of the forest.

“What, unhappy boy! It was you who set fire to the forest of l’Herm?”

After I had told him about this too, he remained a moment silent, his eyes on the map. Then, raising his head, he said to me in a voice which moved me to the depths of my heart:

“Remember never to tell a lie again! And remember also that one must forgive one’s enemies.”

Forgive the Comte de Nansac! That was an idea which did not appeal to me; it seemed to me to be an act of cowardice, and a betrayal of my dead parents. But I said nothing, and the curé rose, telling me to wait for him. While he was in another room at the side, where he slept, I looked about the room in which I was.

As was usual in houses of an earlier time, when people did not crowd themselves into boxes as we do to-day, the room was large. The bare walls, poorly joined, were covered with whitewash; across the ceiling were torn, gray rafters; under foot a rough, badly-made floor. In the center stood the massive table where the curé had his meals; at the back, an ancient cabinet of walnut. On the broader side of the room, a clumsy buffet of the same style, without a dresser, faced the fireplace, the cherry-wood mantel of which was surmounted by a plaster crucifix, such as peddlers sell. Cheap chairs, old and worn, were arranged along

the walls of the room, and at the end, a window, without curtains, in a deep embrasure, gave a view of the distant hills, and, rather poorly, lighted the chamber.

Everything suggested a rustic simplicity, an indifference to the comforts of household life, a contempt for material things.

Presently, the curé came back with a package of clothes under his arm, and led me off.

As we passed through the kitchen Fantille, seeing the package, shook her head:

"You know that pretty soon you will have no change of clothing left!"

"Bah!" said the curé, unmoved. "There are still hemp-fields in the commune, and spinners too—not to mention Séguin, the weaver, who asks for nothing but a chance to work."

And we went out while Fantille was saying:

"Yes, yes, laugh; and then when you have no more shirts. . . ."

I did not hear the end.

In the middle of a little lane which passed between gardens and was bordered by vineyards enclosed by low walls, through which grew the shoots of figtrees, the curé opened a round door, and we found ourselves in a court shut in by a stable, some hen-houses, a bakehouse and high walls. At the back was an old house which ended on one side in a pavilion one story high, with a very tall roof.

In the court, a maid was giving some grain to the fowls and the pigeons.

"Is your mistress at home, Toinette?" said the curé.

"Yes, indeed, Monsieur le curé; she is in the dining-room."

"In that case, I'll go through the garden."

And, pushing open a little wicket, the curé followed the wall, which was hung with jasmine, climbing roses and flowering pomegranates, and stopped before a flight of three steps. The long window was open, and at the entrance was an old lady with white hair, seated in a great arm-chair, working, with a chair full of linen before her.

Hearing the curé address her, she lifted her spectacles and said:

"Ah! it is you, curé; may I wager that you've brought some work for me?"

"Precisely so, and the work is urgent, too."

"You have made another good discovery?"

"Eh? Yes."

And, turning about, he exhibited me to the old lady.

"Oh, Lord Jesus!" she cried. "And where does that one come from?"

"From the Barade forest."

"Well, since he is so tattered, that doesn't astonish me. Come here, my little fellow!"

And when I had mounted the three steps and stood before her, she added:

"He has good need of an outfit, that's certain."

"To begin with," said the curé, "here's something that will make a couple of shirts for him."

The old lady unfolded the two shirts and said:

"Hum! They are not any too good, curé! However, I will try to make them do."

And, saying this, she held one of the shirts against me and measured the length of my body, then of my sleeves, and marked the measurements with pins.

"I'll set about it right away," she continued. "Toinette shall help me, and to-morrow there'll be one. . . . He's nice-looking, that child, you know, curé," she added, lifting her eyes to me, "and he has a lively expression, like a nestful of mice."

"Ah! you women! you always notice physical charms," said the curé, banteringly.

"If that were so," replied the old lady, laughing, "we should not be such good friends."

"A good hit!" said the curé, laughing also. "And where is M. le Chevalier?"

"He has gone all the way to La Grandie to see if the miller has collected much wheat."

"It is to be feared that he hasn't. With the drought there has been this last month, the pond must have dried up. . . . Well, mademoiselle, good-bye, and thank you!"

We left there and went to the weaver's. In a sort of basement like a cellar, where one could scarcely see, the man was sitting on a cross-bar, plying his trade with feet and hands, like a spider spinning its web.

"Séguin," said the curé, "I need some good stout drugget to make some breeches and a jacket for that boy."

"That won't be difficult, Monsieur le curé. You shall have it."

And, having settled the price, the man measured out with his yardstick some stuff which the curé carried off. On the road again, he entered a little house:

"Isn't your husband here, Jeannille?"

"No, Monsieur le curé, he's working at Valmas-singeas; but to-morrow he'll be through."

"Well, let him come to-morrow without fail. Don't neglect to send him word. It's to clothe that boy; you see he needs it."

"Yes, the poor fellow."

"Now," the curé said to me, as we went on, "I shall have a pair of sabots and a hat brought you from Montignac. After that, you'll be all fitted out."

"Excuse me, Monsieur le curé, but I have no need of sabots before winter, for I am in the habit of going barefoot over stones and brambles; and as for what they call a hat, I can never stand anything on my head."

"It's true you have a good shock of hair; but those things will come in handy some time or other."

As soon as we got back, Fantille demanded of the curé where he intended me to sleep.

"In the little room behind yours where the clothes are put; you can make up the folding-bed for him."

And he went into the garden to read his prayer-book.

In the evening, M. le Chevalier de Galibert came after supper, and, seeing me, said:

"Aha! There's the little savage of the Barade forest. . . . What black eyes and what hair! A drop of Saracen blood there. . . . And what were you doing down there, my boy?"

When I had told him my story, without, however, saying anything about the strangling of the dogs or the fire in the forest, the Chevalier drew forth a silver snuff-box from his great waistcoat pocket, took a good pinch, and delivered himself of this sentence:

"*'Noblesse oblige,'* says he who treats his fellows cruelly."

Then, as he went off to find the curé in the garden, he muttered between his teeth:

"Decidedly, this Nansac is not good for much."

Two days afterward, I was dressed in new clothes, and I had a white shirt. After my rags my drugget pantaloons and jacket seemed superb to me. But I continued to go with bare head and feet.

"As you please," the curé had said to me. "But on Sunday you must put on the stockings Fantille has made for you, and your sabots, to go to mass."

What a change in my existence! Instead of begging my bread on the roads, not knowing where I was to sleep at night, I had food and shelter, and my entire work consisted of going to fetch the water or cut the wood for the kitchen, or to help Fantille about the house, and the curé in the garden. I had only one fear,—that it would not last.

One evening, while he was watering his garden, the curé said to me:

"Now that you are tamed, I am going to teach you first to speak French, then to read and write; after that we shall see."

With these words I was well pleased, for I understood then that the curé was interested in me and wished to keep me. From that day onward, every morning after mass, he taught me for two whole hours, after which he gave me lessons to learn during the day. In the evening he taught me again for two more hours before supper. I was so overjoyed to learn, and I wished so earnestly to please the curé, that I worked with a sort of rage; so that the good man sometimes said to me:

"There must be moderation in everything; now go and ask Mlle. Hermine and M. le Chevalier if they do not need you."

Then I would leave my papers and books and run to find Mlle. Hermine, well pleased when she would give me some errand to do. I used to go to the farmers' to get eggs or a pair of chickens, or to La Grandie to fetch flour for a tart. Then, after I had been shown the way to Montignac, and the lady had sent me to buy thread or buttons, and M. le Chevalier tobacco,—ah! how pleased I was then! You may be sure I did not play by the way. Leaving Fanlac, the road was bad and stony, and went down into the valley at a very steep incline. I used to run tumbling down this road, leaping among the stones like a kid; then, crossing the fields and the brook, which disappeared into the Vézère at Thonac, I climbed up the

slope of Sablou, still running. By showing this great diligence, it seemed to me I was expressing my gratitude to the good lady who had made me my first shirt, not to mention the others since then. Certainly she could have told me to go through fire, and I should have been happy to do so at her command. And then she appeared so plainly to be just what she was, good like good bread; so that on merely looking at her gentle face and white hair, under her old-fashioned lace head-dress, I felt honey flow into my heart.

M. le Chevalier de Galibert was an excellent man also, but he was a man, and had not always his sister's delicate consideration. He too was very charitable, but he could not have divined the needs of the poor, and he had not his sister's charming ways of doing good, which doubled their value. Besides, he was of a jovial nature, fond of laughing and joking; and he had always at his tongue's end a number of old sayings or proverbs with which he sprinkled his conversation. To an unlucky man he would say:

"The devil is not always at the poor man's door."

To a man who complained of his wife:

"Women and horses, there are none without faults."

To a man who had lost a lawsuit:

"One is wise after the event."

To a man cheated in a bargain, he would say:

"At the butcher's all calves are steers; at the tanner's all steers are calves."

To those who complained of the rain, he preached patience:

"You must do as they do in Paris;—let it rain."

If it was drought, he said:

"In winter it rains everywhere; in summer where God wishes."

When men found the affairs of the commune going badly, he consoled them after this fashion:

"The donkey that belongs to everybody is always the worst beaten."

And more of the same sort; he never ran short of them.

It was good to see them both, brother and sister, going to mass on Sundays, dressed in the fashion of the olden times. He was an excellent example of the country gentleman of pre-Revolutionary days; he wore a cloth coat of royal blue, cut in the French style, with a large, figured waistcoat; trousers of coarse camlet, colored stockings in summer and high gaiters in winter; well-made shoes with steel buckles; and a black-edged three-cornered hat over his gray locks which were fastened into a queue. She, in her head-dress with lace lappets, her linen fichu knotted behind at the belt, her skirt of striped pekin which revealed her slender ankle and small shoe, her apron of shot-colored silk, and her knitted mittens, would have been taken for a young girl of olden days—with her slender figure and light step—had it not been for her white hair.

On coming out she would take the arm of her brother, holding in her other hand the Book of Hours. In the little square everyone came up to greet and

compliment them, they were so much beloved. And there she saw all her little world, inquired about her poor and those who were ill, brought people home and distributed to some, clothes, to others a bottle of old wine, sweetmeats, or honey. On that day she gave away the things she had worked at during the week,—fustians, swaddling-clothes and bodices for the small babies, skirts and chemises for the poor women. She and the curé had the whole countryside at the tips of their fingers, and they kept each other informed about people. Each one did what he could do best, and these two hearts of gold, these generous friends of the poor, did not stop at the limits of the parish. Fortunately, they had no fear of encroaching on others, for neither in the neighborhood nor for many leagues round about were there any curés or gentry like them.

At first I was greatly astonished to see all this. The curé of Fanlac was the first I had known, except Dom Enjalbert, the chaplain of l'Herm, who in spite of his big paunch had the air of a sly fox, and the curé of Bars, that evil, coarse old miser, who had a heart like a stone. Of noblemen I had seen only the proud and wicked Comte de Nansac, who was the cause of all our misfortunes. So there had been formed in my childish mind the idea that all curés and noblemen were wicked. At my age this way of reasoning was excusable, especially as I had never left our forest; and there are many men better informed than I who reason in this fashion. But when I saw how mistaken I had been, I had a great desire to

make myself useful to those who had treated me so well; and I thought up ways to show my gratitude. Mlle. Hermine was very fond of mushrooms; so at the right season I would rise before dawn in order to be the first in the wood where they were to be found. And how delighted I was to bring her a fine basketful that made her exclaim:

"Oh, what beautiful mushrooms!"

The Chevalier's white mare had never been so well combed, brushed and cared for as she was since I had been with them. For before that time, Cariol, the servant, had devoted most of his care to his oxen, and looked after the mare only with a few "strokes of the pitchfork," as they say. Now she was glossy and in fine condition; so that one day when I brought her up for the Chevalier to ride, with her saddle of well-brushed red velvet, and the buckles of her French bridle shining like gold, he said to me jovially:

"That's right, my boy; 'love me, love my dog.'"

As for the curé, there was no one like him. He cared nothing for what so many people value. When he had enough money to give his charities, he had all he wished for. He made fun of drinking and eating, saying it was all the same whether you had beans or roast chicken. On this score he sometimes attacked the Chevalier, who was rather fond of good eating, and in allusion to some delicacy would make use of the saying: "Wing of partridge, leg of woodcock, the whole thrush."

But it was only for fun that the curé teased him

thus, for he well knew that more than once he had sent the choicest morsels to neighbors who were ill. Although still an ignorant child, only beginning to learn, I soon noticed that nothing pleased the curé better than to do good, and to see those whom he helped benefit by his aid. It was this which gave me such a determination to study, when I saw all the affection he showed towards me.

"As soon as you can read well," he had told me, "you shall learn the responses in the mass, and then you shall serve it for me; for our poor Francès is getting old."

When there's good will, one learns quickly. So one day the curé said to me:

"At Easter, you will be able to serve the mass."

I thanked him simply, for he was not fond of formalities, and did not like compliments, though he was good and kind to an extent that is impossible to describe.

When Easter came, I had my responses at the tip of my tongue. One thing only bothered me,—not understanding the Latin words. I confessed this to the curé, who took it not at all amiss, for he himself preached in patois, so as to be understood. He explained to me what the Latin meant, and I was happy, for it had seemed foolish to utter words without understanding what I said. I was very grand that day, well-dressed in fustian, with a pair of shoes on my feet which Mlle. Hermine had ordered at Montignac. I, who had never had any shoes before,

strutted in them ; and I thought them so very handsome that I could not keep from bending my head to look at them. The Chevalier had bought me a cap as a New Year's gift, so that on this day I was resplendent. The cap was still new, for I was used to going bare-headed in sun, rain or frost.

From this time on, I acted as assistant to the curé, and old Francès had nothing to do but sound the Angelus and go about with his donkey to collect the wheat and oil which, according to the custom, was given him for his work. I was happier than I can tell to be of use to the curé. When he had to take the sacrament to some sick person, I went in front of him with a lantern, ringing the little bell, and behind the curé followed Mlle. Hermine, and some three or four old women of the town, telling their beads. As we passed along the stony roads, the men who were working in the fields stopped their toiling oxen, dropped on their knees and said an "Our Father" for the sick person. And sometimes, far away in the midst of the heath a shepherd, hearing the faint sound of the bell, would silence his barking dogs, and also fall on his knees to pray.

When it was a burial, the curé always went to the house of the dead man to help take the body to the church, no matter how far it was or how poor were the people. Whether it was a burial or a marriage or a baptism, when they asked him what they owed him, he answered:

"Nothing, nothing at all, good people. Set your minds at rest."

And when they had thanked him heartily, and were going off, he would sometimes say, in a low voice:

"What you have freely received, freely give!"

When they were rich landowners, like the people of Coudonnie, Valmassingéas, or La Rolphie, they insisted:

"M. le Curé, at least let us do something for your church, or for your poor!"

"Since you wish it," he would say then. "We need a new altarcloth." Or else: "Have a sack of wheat sent to the widow of Blasillou."

At New Year's, it is true, grateful souls would bring many things to the parsonage,—a pair of capons, or some chickens, or some eggs, or a basket of apples, or a hare, or a bottle of *pinard* wine, or a big measure of chestnuts, or something of that kind. Once a poor woman even brought him three or four dozen medlars in the pocket of her apron. And as she apologized because she did not have more of them, and because they were none too ripe, the curé said to her kindly:

"Thanks, many thanks, mother Babeau. He who has only an apple and gives it, gives more than he who offers a turkey-cock from his flock."

And since his heart was rejoiced that day to see how all the people loved him, he added, smiling, this saying of the Chevalier's:

"With time and straw the medlars ripen."

But these things that were brought him did not all

remain at his house. He gave away half of them to the poor, and if Fantille had not grown angry and locked up the presents, by heaven, he would have given them all away! When someone, for instance, gave him a good bottle of brandy, it was, you may be sure, sent to old La Ramée—that was not his name, but he was never called anything else.

This La Ramée was an old grenadier of “Poléon’s” (as that good soul Minette called him) from Saint-Pierre-de-Chignac. He had campaigned in Egypt, in Italy, in Germany, and finally in Russia, where he had slightly frozen his great toes, so that he walked with difficulty. After the Restoration, they had “split his ear,” as he said, and he had come back to the village, where he would have died of hunger if his sister-in-law, a poor widow, had not taken him in. And if the Chevalier and the curé had not helped her, she could never have managed, for she had no property, except a little house and three acres of land.

But La Ramée, because of his old habits, would rather have gone without bread than without brandy and tobacco; so the curé gave him some from time to time. And the grateful old trooper, when he went out with a switch to one of the *codercs*, or common pastures, to watch his sister’s goslings, if he happened to meet the curé, would draw himself up straight, his heels together, his hand lifted in a military salute to the foraging cap, which he had never given up; then, pointing to the goslings with a gesture, he would say piteously:

"And to think that I have been at Austerlitz!"

On the day when they brought such presents there was always open house at the curé's, and no one went away without having eaten and drunk; and almost a whole crate of wine would be consumed. But fortunately it was not dear in those days.

When I was twelve years old, the curé had me take my first communion. Seeing that all the boys of my age were being confirmed, I forced myself to outdo them by learning the catechism in such a way as to satisfy the curé in that, as in everything. In all these matters of religion, he was not officious or exacting, as some are. He had confessed me early. As I lived with him, always under his eyes, telling him everything I did, consulting him when I was perplexed, he knew me as well as I knew myself. The evening of the first communion, the only confession he asked of me was whether I still felt hatred in my heart for the Comte de Nansac. And when I answered with a timid, "Yes," he talked so beautifully to me about forgetting one's injuries, and exhorted me so earnestly to forgive, after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, that I assured him I would endeavor to forget everything and to drive this hatred out of my heart. At that moment I was truly inclined to do this, but my feeling did not last.

Speaking of forgiveness, I agree heartily that it is a great and beautiful thing to pardon one's enemies, and not try to avenge oneself; only, between two

enemies the forgiveness must be mutual, for if one forgives, and the other does not, the game is no longer fair. As the Chevalier used to say:

“When you become a lamb, the wolf eats you.”

In spite of the extreme poverty of my early years, I was so tall and strong at the time of my first communion that I seemed fifteen years old. During the three years, moreover, that I had lived with the curé, I had learned better and more quickly than most children all he had offered me. I knew French fairly well, a French full of expressions of the soil, of old words, of ancient diction, such as the curé spoke; then the history of France, a little geography and the three R's. But it was in my powers of reasoning that I was far in advance of my age, and in determining what was good or bad, true or false. This was because the curé taught me and formed my judgment at every opportunity, either while I was working in the garden or carrying something to a sick person, or in the moments of leisure that most people merely fritter away, or spend in worse ways than that. Out of some very simple, very ordinary matter, he would know how to draw lessons in good sense and morality, and show me where lay the true blessings of wisdom, moderation and virtue.

To his precepts I conformed as well as I could, and I liked them; but at the depths of my nature there was one thing I could not conquer; it was my hatred for the Comte de Nansac. As I have just said, I had tried hard and in good faith, at the time of my first

communion, to do this, but eight days later I no longer had the same will. When the unhappy past of my early childhood returned to my memory, I said to myself that I should be an ungrateful and unnatural son if I forgot all the misery this man had caused us, and all the misfortunes that had come to us through him. And when I thought of my father, dead in the galleys, and of my mother, dying in all the anguish of despair, my hatred blazed up like a wood-cutter's fire in the rising east wind.

One can understand that everything which I learned to the disadvantage of the Nansacs gave me great pleasure in this state of mind. One day I had reason for rejoicing. I was in the garden digging potatoes, while the curé and the Chevalier were walking up and down in the wide path at the center, when I heard the curé tell the latter that the oldest of the young ladies of Nansac had run off with a young spendthrift, no one knew where. That made me prick up my ears and I heard everything that the Chevalier replied:

"My dear curé, I am not like you; that does not astonish me. She takes after her stock. 'Blood cannot lie.' "

"What do you mean?"

"My dear curé, I had an aunt who was a veritable register of everything that concerned the nobility of Périgord, and I learned many things from her. I see nowadays a number of people who have insinuated themselves into the nobility, who would have been shown the door, to their shame, if they had presented

themselves to vote with us in 1789:—men who have taken the names of noble estates bought for a mere song; men of low birth who left the country for reasons that should have led them straight to the guillotine—for there was this much to be said for the Republic, that it was not gentle with rogues; bourgeois fellows, who disappeared for a moment in the whirlwind of the Revolution, and now pretend to be nobles, like Créqui:—people of that kind don't impose on me. I would gladly say to them, with one of their own number, who showed good sense:

“Some noblemen, or so-called noblemen,
If they but understood secrets,
Would find among the documents of the notaries.
Evidence that they were only peasants after all.”

The curé, who thought the Chevalier was being a little far-fetched, said at this point:

“Pardon me, but I don't see the connection.”

“You shall see it, my friend. That is not the case of the Nansacs; they are nobles of the stamp of Pontchartrain, who sold their letters of nobility for two thousand écus. The father of the old marquis of to-day was, quite simply, a water-carrier, a native of Saint-Flour, who began his fortune in the rue Quincampoix, and has increased it by underhand dealings in military supplies and in any number of suspicious business transactions. This rascal, whose name was Crozat, called himself ‘de Nansac’ after a farm which he owned in his native district. He bought the estate

of l'Herm, and had himself made a nobleman, thanks to his écus. His son, the present marquis, married an unprincipled woman who made herself notorious at a time when it was difficult to distinguish oneself in this way. The extent of her amorous relations caused her to be nicknamed *La Cour et La Ville*. Among her many lovers she had some who were useful to her. The old rake La Vrillière, the all-powerful minister of Louis XV, bent to her caprices. It was he who got for the son of the water-carrier the title of marquis with which he is now tricked out. . . . You understand now, curé, how it is that the daughters of the Count, with such a grandmother, behave as they do."

"These are ugly stories for you!" said the curé. "I did not know of their origin. But confess, Chevalier, that if the throne and the nobility were badly shaken by the Revolution, they deserved it pretty well."

"I admit it, and I include a large part of the clergy that you are forgetting,—vicious monks, boudoir abbés, curés with concubines and all those infidel priests who no longer dared to proclaim Jesus Christ crucified, but spoke only of the 'law-giver of the Christians.' "

"Oh," said the curé, "I concede them to you willingly. From all this," he added, "one can conclude that the Revolution was not useless, for certainly the clergy of our times are better than those of the olden days."

"Yes," said the Chevalier, "and the nobility also.

The chastisement has perhaps been rather harsh, but it was God who held the rod, and he is the only good judge of what we all have deserved."

As for me, I listened to this conversation without losing a word. That was none too honest a thing to do, I admit, but the temptation was too strong. I was delighted to know that the Nansacs were not the best type of noblemen, and indeed when I compared them to the Chevalier and his sister, who were the fine flower of gallant folk, good as canon's bread, upright as it was possible to be, I could not help thinking that there were two races of noblemen, the good and the bad. It was a childish idea; since then I have seen the qualities are intermixed in them, as in all people.

A little while after this conversation, the curé said to me:

"Jacquou, it is time now to think of choosing a trade. Let's see, what do you prefer? Will you be a weaver, a sabot-maker, or a blacksmith? Would you like to be apprenticed to Virelou, the tailor? Have you any preference as to a trade?"

"Monsieur le curé, I will do as you advise me."

"If that is so, my friend, I advise you to become a farmer. That is the most important of all occupations, the healthiest, the most intelligent, and the freest. It is labor in the fields, you will notice, that has freed the peasants of France from servitude, and it is the means by which some day all the land will belong to them. But we need not look so far ahead.

As I expected this response, here is the way I have arranged matters with M. le Chevalier. You will work every day on the reserve with Cariol. He is a good farm worker, who will show you how to plow, weed, till well, reap, make hay, trim the vines, and all the rest. You will live with him and Toinette, at the home of M. le Chevalier, but you will sleep here; for in the evening I can still give you some lessons and teach you some things that will be useful to you later on. Our good folk over there, who have seen their elders not knowing their A, B, C's, and are as ignorant themselves, say it is not necessary to know so much to cultivate the earth; but they are mistaken. A peasant with a little knowledge is worth two others, not to mention the fact that the man who does not know the history or geography of his country is not French, so to speak; he is a Fanlacois, if he comes from Fanlac, and that is all he is. Then, too, a man who can neither read nor write seems to lack one of his senses. . . . When you are grown up and are well acquainted with your occupation as a farmer, you will find it easy to get work; and later, after you have laid by your wages, you will look for some honest economical girl, and marry her and have a home of your own. That's a fine, splendid thing, and well worth considering. So now there, that's settled!"

I thanked the curé heartily and the next day went to work with Cariol.

CHAPTER V

IN this way five years passed, quite fully occupied and free from care. From time to time there rose up in me some painful memory of the Comte de Nansac and all our misfortunes, like the prick of a thistle in my flesh; but labor somewhat deadened it. During the week I would work hard all day, and I ate like a wolf and slept like a log. On Sunday after mass, I played at skittles with the other boys of the little town, or at pitching sous, or again at hide and seek. In the winter we used to shell nuts in the houses, and afterwards each of us went in his turn to make oil in the mill at La Grandie. And then there were evenings when we helped the neighbors husk the maize and shell the chestnuts for the next day, while the women spun and the old people told stories. Finally, a fortnight before Christmas, we boys went to ring *la Luce*, as we called this bell-ringing; and you may be sure the church-bell was very conscientiously swung.

At the festival of Saint Sylvestre, we went from village to village, singing *la Guilloniau* or the New Year's mistletoe, which can be translated into French as follows:

At Paris there is a lady
Who has married rich. . . .

The New Year's mistletoe we beg
For the last day of the year.

She combs her hair and looks in the glass,
In a handsome silver mirror. . . .
The New Year's mistletoe we beg
For the last day of the year.

She used to wear fine dresses
Sewed with fine white thread. . . .
The New Year's mistletoe we beg
For the last day of the year.

But now she wears her dresses
Sewed with silver thread. . . .
The New Year's mistletoe we beg
For the last day of the year.

Or else the song that begins thus:

At Paris on the little bridge,
The New Year's mistletoe we beg,
At Paris on the little bridge,
 My captain!
The New Year's mistletoe we beg,
 And then the gift!

There were three ladies on this bridge. . . .

And we would go into the houses where there were girls, especially, to ask them for the New Year's present of a kiss.

Both these songs speak of Paris, Paris the great city. This is because, for the poor peasant of Périgord in olden times, Paris was the paradise of rich and

beautiful ladies. Pampelune had also caught his imagination, as a far-off country, almost chimerical. Of the man from whom nothing had been heard for long years, we said: "He is at Pampelune." When we spoke of a country, the situation of which we were ignorant of, we said: "It is at Pampelune."

Why Pampelune rather than any other city? The curé Bonal said it came perhaps from the fact that one Cardinal d'Albret, who was very powerful in Périgord at one time, was Bishop of Pampelune, the old capital of the kingdom of Navarre. I know nothing about it; I leave it to other and wiser heads.

In summer there was no more opportunity for all these amusements. We had time only to work, to eat and to sleep; and yet not to sleep too much. During the haymaking and the harvest, we had to rise at three o'clock in the morning, and sometimes if rain threatened, it was nine in the evening before we had finished getting in the hay or the grain. All this was broken only by Sundays and by a few holidays like Christmas, Assumption, and All Saints' Day.

In regard to this last festival, which falls on the eve of All Souls' Day, there was observed in certain houses, and those not the most ignorant, a very curious old custom.

That evening there was a family dinner, and during the meal there was talk of the dead relatives, of their qualities, their virtues, even of their failings, and—as was even stranger—their health was drunk, with clinking glasses. This supper had to be made up of

nine dishes, such as, soup, boiled beef, fricassee, stew, veal stew, pie, etc.

When the meal was ended, they left on the table the meats and all that remained of the various dishes, as a supper for the dead; if there was not enough wine and bread, more was brought.

After that they made a good fire, and arranged the chairs in a half-circle about the hearth. Then, having recited prayers for them, they retired, in order to leave the place to the dead.

The curé Bonal said that all this savored strongly of superstition; but because of the prayers and the pious intentions, he was inclined to close his eyes to it. Besides all these festivals, there was our *vote*, or merrymaking, which fell on the 22d of August, and the festivals of the neighboring parishes, like Bars, Auriac, Thonac, which we seldom missed. But the place we never failed to go to was Montignac, on the 25th of November, to the great fair of St. Catherine's Day. This was never missed; on that day nobody remained in the little town, except the curé, Mlle. Hermine and La Ramée, the very old who could not leave the chimney corner, and the smallest babies. There were many silly women who dragged their little tots there by the hand, or carried them in their arms when they were too small. The Chevalier himself went on his mare to meet his friends, the petty nobility of the neighborhood, and to eat with them a calf's-head or a stuffed turkey at the Soleil d'Or.

At that time, things went along quite to my heart's

desire; everyone was satisfied with me, and I was very grateful to those who were so good to me. But "if life always suited everyone on the earth, no one would wish to go to Paradise," as the Chevalier used to say.

For some time this excellent and worthy man had not been happy. In his gazette he was reading news from Paris which did not please him. Politics were taking a bad turn: four sergeants of La Rochelle had been guillotined, and some generals and officers shot; the returned Jesuits were everywhere in power again and were bad masters. The missionaries sent out by them preached from town to town, inciting persecution of non-believers and Jacobins, and sometimes riots which were harshly suppressed. All this caused a general discontent throughout the whole of France, which favored the development of secret societies.

"You will see," said the Chevalier, as he related all this, "you will see, these *ultras* will end by getting the king sent back into exile."

What these *ultras* were I had no idea, but from all this talk I imagined that they were a sort of royalists, like the Comte de Nansac.

As for the missionaries, the thing was proven, for at Montignac they had planted a cross on the square, exactly on the former site of the Tree of Liberty, and by their violent exhortations and words of hatred, they had managed to rouse up a gang of blackguards against those patriots who were known for their attachment to the cause of the Revolution.

"These devilish missionaries," added the Chevalier, "almost had old Cassius thrown into the Vézère,—the man who once upon a time saved my sister and me."

And as the curé inquired about this, he continued:

"Yes, one day at the Société Populaire, a red-hot patriot demanded that the former nobles, La Jalage and his sister, should be interned; but Chabannais, who was called Cassius, rose and said:

"'Leave the citizen and citizenness La Jalage in peace! It is they who support the poor in this commune, and there are plenty of them here.'

"Twice he spoke in our defense, and in the end made the assembly pass to the order of the day."

"But," said the curé, "you say, La Jalage? Is that your name, then?"

"Certainly; it is our family name. Galibert is the name of the land. We are descended from the famous Jean de la Jalage, whose crude memorial statue you see in a square niche on the outside wall of the Church, which he once defended against the English soldiers."

And, taking time by the forelock, the Chevalier, who was a great story-teller, related the tale of Jean de la Jalage.

"He was," said he, "a sergeant-at-arms of the time of Charles VI. He had followed Marshal Boucicaut in his expedition against Archambaud, the last Count of Périgord, and had later established himself at Fanlac, after the capture of Montignac in 1398. At this time the English were in our country, so that a sort of troop of these brigands, mixed with marauders,

on their way through Périgord, passed by le Cern and Auriac,' and turned towards Fanlac. Our church was fortified, as it still is to-day. Jean de la Jalage had it stocked with provisions, and made the people of the parish retire there; so that when the English arrived, they found they had met their match.

"There were several assaults, all repulsed, and it was in the sortie made to put these ruffians to flight, that Jean de la Jalage received a blow from a battle-axe which struck off his arm. That is the reason why his statue shows him with only one arm. The English, soundly thrashed, went off in the direction of Rouffignac, leaving half of their band dead around the church. It was as a reward for this deed of arms and for his former services that the Duke of Orleans, then Count of Périgord, gave to my ancestor the fief of Galibert, the name of which he, as well as his descendants, took, so that the name of La Jalage has been entirely abandoned. Cassius therefore called us La Jalage, in the same way that they called poor Louis XVI, Capet."

"Now," said the curé, "I understand your coat-of-arms. The *jalage*, in patois, is the gorse, or spiny broom."

"Yes," said the Chevalier, "Jean de la Jalage, ennobled and possessed of the fief of Galibert, took for his arms a spiny flowering gorse of golden sinople, on a background of silver, with the device:—'He who touches will be pricked!' And indeed he was a rough

man whom it was not good to brush against, even after he was disabled. . . . ”

I have said that the Chevalier was not pleased with the way affairs were going, but soon the curé had even more to complain of.

A few days after the story of Jean de la Jalage, the rural postman of Montignac brought him a letter sealed with violet wax, which had come from Périgueux. After reading it, the curé came to the Chevalier and said he needed to send me to La Granval.

“He belongs to you more than to me,” said the Chevalier; “the permission is unnecessary.”

When I had quickly dressed, the curé said to me:

“You are to go to La Granval and find Le Rey, and you are to tell him that I need an advance of ten écus on the contract of St. John’s Day. It is not necessary to hurry; sleep there and return to-morrow. That will be soon enough.”

So I went off, taking the shortest possible cuts. I crossed the heath beyond Fanlac, and went straight to La Granval, by way of Chambor, Saint-Michel and Lac-Viel. When I arrived, Le Rey’s wife could not believe that it was I:

“My God! It cannot possibly be you, Jacquou!”

When I had recalled to her all that had happened at the time of our misfortunes, she was finally convinced. Le Rey, coming back a little later, recognized me perfectly, and said:

“Well, here you are full-fledged, my boy!”

That evening, I took supper with these good people, and they then had me spend the night. When I was in bed in this house where my poor father had been captured, I had melancholy thoughts for a long time, but finally I fell asleep.

At dawn I arose. Le Rey gave me the ten écus and I set off, but not before I had drunk a health with him.

Here I must say that for some time past, whenever I saw a boy and girl walking alone on the road, or talking together on Sunday in the square, holding hands and courting, my mind had been turned to thoughts of love. And then, I do not know why, I had begun to think of little Lina. I wondered if she was still at Puypautier, what she was doing, if she was as pretty as when she was little; and I thought that I should be very happy to have her for a sweetheart. All this made me very anxious to see her, now that I was in this neighborhood. To go to Puypautier took me a little out of my way, but I was not in a hurry. As I approached the village, quite embarrassed as to how I could manage to see her without her knowing it, I met a little girl who was watching her geese, as Lina used to do when I knew her. When I asked this child, she told me that Lina was tending her sheep, and that she was probably in the fallow land, which she pointed out to me. I went over there, and as I came nearer I saw her quite alone, knitting a stocking and leaning against an oak tree on the edge of the field, while her sheep were cropping the short

grass. I came close to her, making no noise, and said:

"Oh, Lina! Is it really you?"

"Jacquou!" she cried, recognizing me, and turning quite pink.

Then I asked the news about her and her household, and learned many things. Old G ral had married her mother, and she was now the daughter of the house.

This news scarcely pleased me; I should have preferred to find her poor like myself. But I was so happy at seeing her again that it was only a moment's disappointment. She was always gentle and lovable, was Lina. Now she was a beautiful girl, of medium height, with a good figure and a pretty face. Her kerchief disclosed her light-brown hair. Her eyes, brown and mild, were fringed with long lashes, shadowing her cheeks, which were downy like a ripe peach. And her little mouth, red like a wood-strawberry, showed her white teeth when she laughed.

"How pretty you are, Lina!"

"You're joking, Jacquou!"

"No, on my honor, I say what I think!"

"All the boys talk like that."

"Ah! So there are some who tell you that?" I asked, pricked with jealousy.

"One cannot help that, but one doesn't have to believe them."

"And me? Tell me, do you believe me?"

"You are inquisitive, Jacquou," she said, laughing.

"Oh, listen, my little Lina. In the eight years since I've seen you, I've often thought of you. I seemed to see you still, all dainty with your curly head, watching your geese along the roads, as pretty as a wood-pigeon. The older I've grown, the more my fancy has turned towards you, and now that I've seen you again, you'll never go out of my thoughts, no matter what happens."

"Oh, Jacquou! What a wheedler you are! . . . And where have you learned to talk like that?"

Then I told her my whole story, cursing the Comte de Nansac, and warmly praising the Chevalier and his sister, and the curé Bonal who had taught me. I saw clearly that what I told her pleased her, and that she was glad I had a little more learning than was usual at this time in our neighborhood, where you could have sought for two leagues round about the forest without finding a peasant who could read. From time to time she raised her eyes to mine, without stopping her stocking, and from her glance, which told me her whole thought, poor girl, I saw that she did not dislike me.

Speaking of the curé made me remember that I had been gossiping there for two hours and that I should be obliged to go on. But first I wished Lina to tell me where I could see her again. She thought it would not do for me to come and talk to her at Bars on Sunday after mass, for her mother, who was always there, would not think it proper.

"So I'll not see you again?"

"Listen," she said, "I'm going to Auriac with a neighbor, on Saint Rémy's Day, the 23d of August. . . ."

"Then I'll go to the service on Saint Rémy's Day," and, looking at her lovingly, I took her hand:

"Oh, my Lina, at this moment I am very happy. . . . Good-bye!"

And, at the same time, I drew her slightly towards me, blushing, and kissed her.

"You're taking advantage of my kindness, Jacquou!"

I kissed her again, and went off, not without many a glance behind me. And as I went I seemed to have wings, and felt that all my senses were suddenly keener. The country seemed more beautiful, the trees greener, the sky bluer. In myself I felt a strength unknown up to that day. Sometimes as I reached the foot of a hill, I would be seized with the need of expending this force, and I would run up it, over the stones and underbrush; when I had reached the top, I would stop, breathing heavily, and survey proudly the steep slope I had scaled.

When I entered the curé's house, he was talking with the Chevalier.

"I keep coming back to that," the latter was saying. "What the devil do they want with you?"

"Evidently nothing good. It is some trick of these Jesuit foxes, who want to do me an ill turn with the Bishop."

The next day the curé, having borrowed the Chevalier's mare and gaiters, mounted her and departed for Périgueux by the crossroads, passing by Saint Geyrac.

"A good journey to you, curé!" said the Chevalier. "The mare is steady, but hold her in all the same on the descents. You know the proverb: 'There is no horse so good it does not stumble.'"

When, three days later, the curé came back, I saw by his face that something had gone wrong. When I asked him if he had had a good trip he answered:

"Yes, Jacquou, as far as concerns the journey itself."

I dared not ask more, and led the mare off to the stable.

As soon as he had learned of the curé's return, the Chevalier came over to the parsonage to hear all about it, and in the evening he repeated the whole story to his sister. At the time of the Revolution, the curé had taken the oath of allegiance to the civil establishment of the clergy, and now, thirty years later, they were beginning to badger him about it; indeed, they had demanded from him a public retraction of his oath.

He had replied to the Bishop that he had given his oath before, because it was not a question of church doctrine; his conscience did not reproach him in the matter, and he did not feel inclined to retract, either publicly or privately. Whereupon the Bishop, with the air of a great lord of the Church, had dismissed him, urging him to reflect carefully before entering upon a struggle in which he would be broken like glass.

"These extremists among the clergy, that is to say,

the Jesuits and their followers, will destroy religion, just as the ultra-royalists will destroy royalty," added the Chevalier, by way of conclusion.

"And what is the curé going to do?" asked Mlle. Hermine.

"Nothing. He says he will wait for them to act."

Meanwhile, the Chevalier caught a chill, and was obliged to take to his bed. As his sister tormented him to see a doctor, he sent for me.

"Master Jacques, in order to please mademoiselle, you must go to Montignac to fetch a doctor."

"There is a young one," she said, "who, they say, is very skillful. You must get him to come."

"Not at all, sister," said the Chevalier. "Young doctors fill the cemeteries with mounds. You will go, Jacquou, and find that old Diafoirus de Fournet. If he cannot come you will explain to him that I need a drug to make me perspire, since I have caught a chill. And when he has given you the prescription, you will take it to Riquer, the gunpowder-mixer, warning him not to mistake one vial for another. Heaven preserve us from a notary's etcetera and an apothecary's quiproquo!"

"Oh!" exclaimed the curé, who entered at this moment, "I see you are not in danger!"

At Montignac, that evening, when my errand to M. Fournet was done, I happened to pass by the church of Plo, where the missionaries were preaching. Curiosity made me go in. In the pulpit was a thin, yellow Jesuit, with the face of a weasel, who was declaiming against Jacobins, heretics, and unbelievers.

He looked like one of those hypocrites who discipline themselves with a fox tail. After giving a good drubbing to the enemies of religion, those devouring wolves engendered by the philosophers and the Revolution, he added that this Revolution had been so satanic in its principles and works, that even pastors, having charge of souls, had let themselves be seduced by it. And he cried out:

“Yes, even in the sanctuary the demon has made proselytes! Do not think that I speak of regions far distant! At the very gates of this town which, after the orgies of the Revolution, has returned to God, there are some of these wolves who dress themselves in sheep’s clothing in order better to destroy the souls which our Lord Jesus Christ has given into their charge, and who conceal under the mantle of a lying charity the pride of renegades and the vices of hypocritical libertines!”

And at this, the villain stretched out his arm in the direction of Fanlac, so that everyone present understood that he spoke of the curé Bonal, who had formerly been vicar of Montignac. Hearing that beast speak in this way of the curé, I was on the point of shouting out to him, in a burst of anger: “You lie! scoundrel!” But I restrained myself, and only said it in a low voice which made several persons in the back of the church where I was turn around. Then I went out, furious.

“Is it possible,” I thought, “that a man so good and charitable, a priest of so exemplary a life and

of a character which deserves the respect of all, should be so villainously calumniated by his own brethren!"

I say, by his own brethren, because, besides the missionaries, there were curés in the neighborhood who, in order to placate the all-powerful Jesuits, took the hint from them and spread secretly a mass of lies about the curé Bonal. They did not love him either, all those clergy of the deanery of Montignac, for his conduct was an accusation against them all. He was never seen at those drinking bouts which they held in each others' houses under the pretext of a neighborhood festival, or without any pretext at all, debauches from which they came out with red ears and stuffed stomachs, gorged with good wine. When he was obliged, for official reasons, to be present at a meeting or a dinner, he did not pass the night with the others, playing stupid games of cards, but found a good reason for retiring. The person who spoke the worst of him behind his back—for to his face he played the hypocrite, the dissembler—was Dom Enjalbert, the chaplain of l'Herm. It was he who, going to lick his plate at the houses of neighboring curés, had for a long time been spreading abroad wicked rumors concerning the curé Bonal. The curé knew it, but paid no attention to it, confident that his conduct stood surety for him; and indeed, in the parish he was loved and respected as he deserved to be. As long as the diocese was under the Bishop of Angoulême, he had been left in peace. But during the few years since they had re-established the bishopric of Périgueux, he

had endured vexations and annoyances, and he now realized plainly that they wished to ruin him.

"If they were dealing with me," the Chevalier sometimes said to him, "I would publicly unmask all these bad Christians!"

"Yes! Often the blood boils in my veins; but the scandal would fall on religion. It is better for me to keep silent."

If he had known, however, all that these wretches said about him and Mlle. Hermine—as I learned on returning from the festival at Auriac—he would not, perhaps, have had so much patience.

For I did go to this service of Saint Rémy; I was careful not to miss my appointment, as you can imagine. The evening before, I took advantage of a moment when the curé had come to see the Chevalier, to ask permission of them both. When my request had been heard, the Chevalier said:

"'At the pilgrimage nearby there is little wax and much wine.'"

"But, M. le Chevalier," I answered, "Rome is too far away."

"Oh, you would be a Roman pilgrim, which is the same thing: 'Never a horse or a bad man grew any better for going to Rome.'"

And, quite pleased with himself, the Chevalier added:

"If M. le curé consents, I am willing."

"As I know he will behave, I am willing too," said the curé.

And I withdrew, very happy.

The next morning, when I had breakfasted early, Mlle. Hermine said to me:

“Here are ten sous to have a good time with.”

I thanked her heartily, and went off full of joy. I already had, in sou and liard pieces, twenty-two and a half sous, tied up in the corner of my handkerchief. I added the ten sous, and went off feeling rich already. I went down to Glaudou, and then below Le Verdier, and climbed across the heath to reach the old highway on the plateau near La Maninie, at a place called Coupe-Boursil,—a name not any too reassuring; but in broad daylight, my thirty-two and a half sous ran no risk. This road was very wide, as can still be seen in many places. They say it is the road followed by Marshal Boucicaut when he went to besiege Montignac. It was very warm. Under the blazing sun the buds of the broom were bursting audibly, scattering their black seeds far and wide. I wore over my vest only a blue blouse, quite new, and I had on one of those straw hats which the women in our province weave in their moments of leisure, while going to the fairs or watching the flocks. The straw was not as fine as that of the hats they sell everywhere to-day, but it was more substantial and in the country everyone wore these hats, that is, of course, all the peasants. A quarter of an hour before reaching Quatre-Bornes, I took a shortcut past the village of Lécheryrie and then along the garden walls of the château of Beaupuy, from which I finally descended into the valley of the

Laurence, where lies the chapel of Saint Rémy, a short quarter of a league above Auriac.

Close to the fields, on the edge of the old road, in a sort of common, is built the old chapel, with two gables ornamented by grimacing figures. Round about, on the stony, sandy soil, the grass grows thin and short, but close against the walls, the ground, well manured by the passers-by, raises masses of nettles, wild carrots, donkey cabbage, spicy, luxuriant mint. At ordinary times this place has a dismal, abandoned air, and the building, its walls blackened by the centuries, resembles a great cemetery chapel.

On days of pilgrimage, on the other hand, the spot is noisy and animated. People come from afar rather than from nearby; the saints are like the prophets, they have not much honor at home. The neighboring parishes, above and below Montignac, send many pilgrims, but it is especially from lower Limousin that people flock there. Only, since these folk from Limoges never lost their heads on account of religion—although they have plenty of it—they bring in their mule-baskets the fruits of the season, especially melons. It might be called the feast of melons, there are so many of them. On beds of straw they are spread out there, little, big, of all varieties, round like a ball, oval like an egg, flattened at both ends,—melons with sides that are smooth, rough, green, yellow, gray,—how can I mention them all! And how they sell! It is a fruit new to the neighborhood, for the country

about Brives and d'Objat is much more seasonable than here, so that those people from our district who have come to the celebration are very anxious to take back a melon. It is a sort of proof that one has been to Saint Rémy of Auriac.

I say of Auriac, because Saint Rémy has still another celebration in Périgord; it is at Saint Raphaël, on the heights, between Cherveix and Excideuil. There, in the church, is the tomb of the saint, on which people sat astride, just as at Auriac they rubbed themselves against the statue, to cure themselves of all sorts of pains and illnesses. And they are cured there as they are at Auriac.

In former times, the tomb of Saint Rémy was not in the town of Saint Raphaël, but at a sort of cross-roads where four parishes came together,—Cherveix, Anliac, Saint Médard and Saint Raphaël. As this tomb attracted a great many people, these four parishes quarreled over it. One day the men of Anliac brought their best oxen and fastened them to the stone of the tomb, but could not stir it an inch. The people of Saint Médard tried next but succeeded no better. Then the rich landowners of Cherveix, with their big strong oxen of the plains, blessed for the occasion, went up in their turn and tried to drag away this stone, but with no more success than the others. Finally, the people of Saint Raphaël came in a procession with a donkey, all they had, poor souls!—and after the curé had invoked the great Saint Rémy, the

donkey was fastened to the tomb, and easily dragged the stone across the waste land as far as Saint Raphaël, where it remains.

That is the way the people of the district tell the story; as for me, I do not guarantee anything.

To return to the celebration at Auriac: it is also a basket-fair, not those baskets of coarse osier for gathering or picking up nuts and chestnuts—but those pretty white wicker baskets in all shapes,—the great flat baskets that girls use for picking strawberries, as well as those handsome round or square baskets with two lids, which hold so many things when one comes back from the fair.

Also, to sustain those who have come from a long distance, there are bakers from Montignac, selling rolls and breads made of eggs flavored with fennel; and also sellers of ring cakes. Then, against the hedgerows in the shadow, well sheltered with boughs, are little booths on stands, where wine is sold by the pot or by the pint.

When I had passed the mill of Beaupuy and was on the little height dominating the valley, I stopped, and tried to recognize Lina in the crowd of people about the chapel, but I could not do so. I saw white headdresses, colored kerchiefs, women's straw hats, checkered fichus, but that was all. So, walking on, I finally reached the chapel and began to search among all these people. I was quite a time walking about everywhere, climbing over the heaps of melons, the baskets of peaches, shoving people aside and work-

ing my elbows to make way for myself; but I did not see Lina. "That mean mother of hers," I thought, "has perhaps prevented her from coming. . . ." While I stood there, very much put out by this idea, there came up from the little town, along the road bordered by thick hedges, the procession of pilgrims. As I was looking to see if Lina was in the ranks, I heard someone say behind me:

"Well, he's thinking sweet thoughts about you!"

I turned quickly, and saw Lina with another girl.

"Ah, there you are! And how are you? It's a long time I've been looking for you. Where were you, now?"

"We've only just arrived."

And I said to myself: "If she had been there, I should certainly have seen her."

So the three of us began to chatter, not about anything very remarkable perhaps; but it is enough to be with the girl one loves, to be happy. From certain words, sometimes, one understands that she wishes to express something beyond the bare meaning of what she says, and one does understand even if one is not very clever; for, in affairs of this sort, one always has wits enough. Then there is the delight of her presence, the eyes that speak too, the hands that clasp each other; you watch the movement of her quick, smiling lips, and you are happy over the little musical laughs that reveal her strong, white teeth.

While we were gossiping, the procession arrived. At the head, as was proper, came the sacristan, a little,

dark man, who had rather a hypocritical air, and was rejoicing in advance—one could see that in his eyes—at what this day was going to bring him. After him, in two lines, came the more devout of the pilgrims, who had just heard mass in the parish church, and were now coming to the mass of Saint Rémy, which was much more highly esteemed on that day. These pilgrims were, first, the women of the parishes about Montignac; then, those who had come from the slope of Salignac, (which stretches towards Quercy), with their heads covered with handkerchiefs in red and yellow checks, and dressed in skirts of drugget with red aprons; then there were others who had come from the slope of Thenon and of Gabillou, in blue stockings, caps with lappets, and very wide fichus of printed calico, held in front by their cotton aprons. Then came the largest crowd, mostly women, from lower Limousin, near the borders of Auvergne, wearing caps, black as monks', of woollen lace, and over them black straw hats which had high crowns and brims in front that looked like great visors. They walked heavily, in clumsy, hob-nailed shoes, as did their husbands. The men were dressed in the fashion of their province, in breeches of coarse sackcloth or drugget; there were few blouses, but instead round fustian jackets of strong blue cloth, with pockets in their narrow backs. And you recognized the men who were careful of their money by the bit of bread which swelled a pocket on one side, and the small flask of earthenware, projecting from the other, stoppered with

a carrot or a corn-husk. Some, instead of bread, had a ring cake in their pocket, but these were considered extravagant.

All these men, with their large, broad-brimmed, black hats in their hands, walked slowly on the stony, dusty road, under a burning sun which made their eyes blink. The women followed slowly, moving their lips, their rosaries in one hand, and in the other a little wax candle the flame of which could scarcely be seen in the blinding sunshine. In among the sound people, one noticed lame men, dragging along, by means of a crutch, a leg attacked with "Saint Anthony's evil," or erysipelas. Others had an arm in a sling, wrapped up in a clean white cloth for the occasion; and still others had strained their backs, as was indicated by a lump on the groin, under their breeches. Among all these faces, burned by the harvests and the farm labor, there were the faces of invalids, yellow, cadaverous, showing their fever and pain. Some of them were led by the hand, half blind, with a bandage over their eyes. All these people had come to beg a cure from good Saint Rémy; some had pains, or sickness caused by those who cast spells or chills; others had the falling-sickness, or scratched themselves, consumed by "Saint-Mary's evil," or the itch, which was very common at that time. Among the sick were old and young; men worn out by a heavy cold which had settled on their chests; women in poor health from the effects of childbirth; pale girls; children with ring-worm; poor barren couples who, lacking the means to

go to Brantôme or to Rocamadour to touch the bolt, came to ask a child of Saint Rémy.

Behind the two long lines of pilgrims came the curés, singing litanies, some in long-sleeved surplices, in stoles embroidered with flowers; and last of all came the curé of the parish, in a gold chasuble, carrying the covered chalice. They were a fine sight to see, all in their best, with red shining faces, very florid under their birettas or leather skull-caps, their black or gray locks falling in curls on their necks. There was nothing the matter with them, those fellows. Oh, no! One saw that at once! They were old-fashioned curés, good livers who did not look for knots in a bulrush and drove their flocks towards Paradise without troubling themselves about the Sacred Heart or the Immaculate Conception or the Infallibility of the Pope. Without doubt, there were a few who set people talking because they loved too well the holy water in their cellars, or had two chambermaids, twenty-five years old, instead of one of fifty, or some niece or other. In spite of that, they were just as good or better than those of to-day, who dilute their wine, and have aged servants, but who are bilious, spiteful, hypocritical, intriguing, stingy, and who seek among their women parishioners what they lack at home.

But, after all, such things are all alike to me. He who likes to split hairs can decide this question, if he wishes.

All three of us, Lina, her friend and I, watched with curiosity this motley multitude, as it filed past

and was swallowed up in the chapel. The curés made a detour to avoid the heaps of melons and baskets, casting a glance here and there, without turning their heads, when among the crowd about the entrance they recognized some pretty lamb of their flock. When they had gone in, we entered the chapel, which was packed full, although it was quite large. One could not see very clearly, for the windows were very small, and heavily grated with iron bars, for fear of robbers. What they could have stolen, however, I do not know. The whitewashed walls, green here and there with damp, had no rich fixtures. They were bare, except above the altar, where a villainous daub, in a wooden frame, painted yellow to imitate gold, showed the good God, with a handsome beard, receiving Saint Rémy into Paradise. Undoubtedly, this painting had never been beautiful, and it was very old, so that the faded colors were peeling off in spots, carrying away the nose of the saint or the eye of an angel who was playing the flute. The altar was painted gray, and had formerly been striped with blue. The big chandeliers were of wood, painted over with a golden yellow that was now tarnished, as were all the colors in this damp chapel, which smelled of mold and, as one almost thought, of the sores which had been displayed here for centuries. On a little table, covered with a sort of cloth, by the side of the door, was a wooden statue of Saint Rémy, which looked as if it had been made by the sabot-maker of Auriac, it was so badly carved. It had indeed been painted since

with several colors, to improve its appearance a little, but the robe of blue, and the cloak of red ochre, scarcely embellished that poor saint.

This I pointed out to Lina, whispering in her ear:

"I could do as well with a pruning-knife!"

"Listen to the mass," she said, smiling.

It was the curé of Auriac who was saying it, or rather singing it, an old man, with hair streaked with gray and a good face, and still vigorous. He was served by two choir-boys, and was assisted by two other priests in their robes, who made great reverences before him with clasped hands, and embraced the articles in giving them to him, lifting up his chasuble when he kneeled, in short, going through a lot of ceremonies of this nature. I thought it all very strange, for I had never seen any mass but that said by the curé Bonal, who officiated very simply. There were many women who took communion, so that with all these ceremonies the mass lasted a long time. But finally it came to an end, and I was not displeased. As they were about to go out, the curé announced that they were going to lunch, and urged each of us to do likewise, so that we could all be back at two o'clock; the vespers were to be sung with a sermon and the blessing of the Holy Sacrament, after which they would continue to give the gospels.

"But," he added, "as there are some here who come from a distance, and could not wait so late, M. the curé of Aubas is going to remain to give the gospels to them."

And indeed, as soon as the others had left, the curé of Aubas, with a book in his hand, assisted by a sacristan who held a pewter bowl, was surrounded by a crowd of people who demanded the gospels. The curé had in truth said "give," but that was only a manner of speaking, for one paid for them. When you had given your sous to the sacristan, who threw them into the bowl, he said:

"It is that one's turn."

So each in turn approached the curé, who put a stole on the sufferer's head, and recited the verses of the gospel according to Saint Matthew, where it speaks of the healing of many sick and infirm. After the gospel, the people went to rub their bodies against the saint. For the gospel did not count so much as Saint Rémy did, especially as the gospel cost something, while the saint could be rubbed free of charge. But it was not the statue in the choir that was used; it had done no good to paint him in colors, for no one looked at him. The real statue was a little stone saint which had been pulled out of its niche, and which each person took to rub against his afflicted part, or to be rubbed with by a neighbor, when the trouble was in the spine or loins. They rubbed their stomachs with it, their arms, legs, thighs, and as much of the skin as they could. This good fellow of a saint had such a reputation as a healer that people called him, in patois, Saint Remedy. And when the church was closed during the year, the passers-by who were afflicted with ailments would go, full of confidence, to

rub themselves against the outside wall of the chapel opposite his niche.

But on days of pilgrimage like this, one rubbed oneself directly. Those who had sciatica passed the image from the hip down to the heel, outside their breeches; but sometimes old women, crippled with pain, who were not ashamed to show their garters, rubbed him under their skirts, confident that rubbing on the skin was more efficacious. Oh, he saw some fine things, that poor devil of a saint!

When I say he saw some fine things there, it is only a manner of speaking, for he had neither eyes nor nose nor mouth. During the centuries that had passed since a skillful curé had fashioned the saint, the statue had rubbed so many arms, legs, thighs, shoulders, spines, ribs, loins, that he was quite worn off. Like those cardboard figures which modistes in the country used to use to display their coiffures, and which through much using became nothing but balls of frayed pasteboard without features or colors, the unhappy image had no longer the face of a saint, or even of a man. His arms, legs, feet, hands, head, had been so much rubbed that they had quite disappeared, and one could make out no part of his body, not even the face; everything, under this treatment, had been blended together. It might just as well have been an old milestone, worn away by cart-wheels, corroded by rain and frost, as a statue consumed by centuries of rubbing. But this did not detract in the least from the faith of these poor souls or their desire

to be cured. They quarreled over the saint, which each one wanted. Sometimes two persons would seize him at once and pull him, each in his own direction, and there would follow stifled protests:

"It's my turn!"

"No, it's mine!"

"That's not true!"

And meanwhile the curé, who had seen all this on other occasions, was reciting his verses from the gospel, in the midst of that muffled clamor; and one heard the sous fall into the pewter bowl which the tired sacristan had placed on a chair.

"Let us go out," I said to Lina and her friend, after we had watched the people for a long time.

Once outside, I breathed deeply, glad to be again in the open air. Then, after we had walked about a little, I took the two girls to the shadow of a nut-tree at the edge of a field, and said:

"Do not move from here; I will come back immediately."

And I went off to buy a melon, some peaches, and a loaf of wheat bread; I also had a bottle of wine drawn from the cask belonging to a man from the hill of Gardes, above Montignac, where they used to make good wine in those days. Altogether, it cost me fourteen sous; things were not dear then as they are to-day.

When the girls saw me coming back loaded down in this way, they cried:

"Oh, what is all this?"

"It's all right," I told them. "Look, here are the curés coming back. It's two o'clock, lunch-time; let's eat."

Lina objected a little, afraid lest someone from home should see her and tell her mother. I managed to reassure her, however; we sat down on the grass against a hedge, and I cut the bread and the melon, and we fell to eating and chatting gayly.

"But," all at once said Lina's friend, whose name was Bertrille, "how are we going to drink, when there are no goblets?"

"My faith," I replied, "you shall drink first out of the bottle; Lina will drink next, and I last. That's the proper way."

"Men," she replied, "are thirstier than women; it's yours to begin."

"Not at all; I am too polite for that!"

And I handed the bottle to her.

She took it, winking one eye a little, as much as to say:

"Come, I understand you!"

When she had drunk, she passed the bottle to Lina, who took a few swallows, and gave it to me.

"I am going to know what you are thinking, Lina!" I said.

And, taking the bottle, I began to drink slowly.

"He is going to finish it!" said Bertrille, laughing.

But it was not on account of the wine that I made the pleasure last; as I drank, I cast at Lina a glance which made her blush a little.

While we were there, we heard the curés singing vespers at the top of their lungs, like men who have renewed their strength, and know that they are going to have a rest at table in the evening. But I was not curious to go over there, nor were the girls, for we were comfortable where we were.

The bottle having been emptied at the third round, I wanted to have another drawn, so much to my taste was this manner of drinking after Lina. But both of them told me I was a drunkard, and that so far as they were concerned, they would drink no more. Seeing this, I carried the bottle back to the man with the cask, and we walked up to Auriac, while the preaching was beginning.

The inns were full of men drinking. These were mostly men of the parish, who felt no great devotion for the saint, and left him to the itinerant strangers; but who loved him just the same, because he kept the business of the place going. They were toasting him, glass in hand.

At this moment, the fruit-vendors from the vicinity of Brives and Objat began to leave, having emptied their mule-baskets and filled up their leather purses with big sou-pieces. Those who still had a few melons left, sold them for almost nothing to the inns, or to those who had been clever enough to wait until late before buying. We walked around for a long time in the little town and on the square, where they were dancing in the shadow of the great elms. I danced a quadrille and a *bourée* with Lina, and then with

Bertrille, and afterwards we all three set off again on the road, Lina and I linking our little fingers, (as is the custom with lovers,) while we climbed up to the chapel. I went in alone. The services were over; the benediction had been given, and the curés had left. But for all that, people were not leaving the chapel. Another priest had relieved the curé of Aubas, who had recited the gospels first; indeed he must have been weary. As for the poor sacristan, who was the only sacristan there, and who, perhaps, did not wish to leave the bowl, he had to stay on. But he was consoled at seeing it fill up with sous, among which shone fifteen- and thirty-sou pieces,—of all of which he counted on getting his share.

And the saint still rubbed and rubbed, passing from hand to hand, always being disputed over and clutched at by impatient people. Because of the great heat, all these people had taken refreshment, some of them a little too much; so that the crowd was noisier than after the mass. Some, as red as cocks, seized the saint and tried to wrest him from others who resisted valiantly, not having had time to rub themselves. In this chapel, smelling of moldy dust and close air, there rose a disgusting odor from this throng of people with breath smelling of wine, dirty, perspiring, heated by the march and foul with sores. They no longer restrained themselves, but spoke loudly, unbuttoned their clothes, and undid their sleeves to rub their arms; the women unhooked their bodices to touch the saint to a nipple swollen by a deposit of milk, or tucked up

their skirts and undid their garters to rub their bare legs, displaying, without shame, their dirty knees. At such sights there sometimes rose a ripple of laughter from those who, like myself, had come out of curiosity. But the good believers, who awaited their turn and had their eyes on the saint, looked crossly at the scoffers. From the middle of this dull buzzing, this hubbub of protests, and vile insults, there would rise at times the wail of an invalid pushed by a brutal hand, or the cry of a woman whose foot had been crushed by a heavy, nailed shoe. For all these people pushed and shoved, walked on each others' toes, dug their elbows into each others' sides, with stifled oaths, as if they were out of their senses. And all the time, at the entrance of the little choir, the curé kept reciting the verses from the gospel, and the sous still fell, almost filling up the sacristan's bowl.

From the crowded throng there came out men who were buttoning themselves up, women who were hooking their clothes, or refastening their blue stockings with a bit of hemp or string that served them as garters. And little by little, as no others arrived, the mass of those people who had satisfied their superstitious mania diminished, and soon there were left only a few foolish old women who could not make up their minds to go. Then, from the corners of the chapel where they were waiting, there dragged themselves out haltingly, the sick, the infirm, the crippled, the helpless, who had not dared to thrust themselves into the crowd, where they would have been crushed,

and who now came to rub themselves in their turn, displaying without shame their hideous ailments, and helping each other charitably when the location of the afflicted spot made it necessary. The unlucky saint was still rubbing a few twisted backs, a few disabled legs, a few withered arms. He endured once more the dirty touch of caked or open sores, of suppurating ulcers, and was finally put back in his niche, in peace for a year, by the sacristan, who now for want of customers, had stopped receiving the sous, as the curé had stopped reciting the gospels. And, since everyone had left, there remained on the flagging, covered with earth and mortar brought in by the feet of the devotees, only buttons torn off in haste, and many bits of broken garters.

I have heard that since that time this celebration has fallen off a great deal, and that people no longer flock there like sheep, as in the olden days. The faith in this trunk of misshapen stone, which is called the saint, has disappeared, as have so many other good things, and no one pretends to believe in it any more, except the people of lower Limousin, who keep up a show of faith for the sake of their melons. But, by way of compensation, those who absolutely need to be fooled carry their money to fortune-tellers at the fairs, or buy powders from charlatans,—which comes to the same thing in the end.

When I came out, I found the two girls, who were returning from a little walk by themselves, and we discussed going home. You can well understand that

I wished to escort them part of the way, for I had had no chance, in this crowd, to speak quietly to Lina. To tell the truth, this celebration is not very satisfactory for lovers, for one is always in sight, in this valley of the Laurence where there are nothing but fields and slopes of vineyards on each side, in the game preserves of the Château de la Faye. Even if you have no evil intentions, you like to be a little secluded. Ah! it is not like the pilgrimage to Fonperrine, where you are right in the middle of the woods.

So we went off, all three of us, following at first the highway from Angoulême to Sarlat, which runs through the valley along the fields of Beaupuy, to ascend finally to La Bouyerie and Quatre-Bornes. I had my arm around Lina's waist, and held her hand, walking slowly and talking of one thing and another,—of how happy I had been that day, of all the pleasure I had had in spending it with her, and of how we might manage to see each other again. Bertrille walked alongside of Lina, but from time to time the good girl would pretend to pick some flower by the roadside, and stayed behind a little, so as to allow us to talk more freely. When we reached Quatre-Bornes, I should have left them, but I said to Lina:

"I'm going with you a little further."

And there we were, following the track traced by the carts through the great chestnut woods. We were so much occupied in talking, Lina and I, that we were near Orlégie before we noticed it, but Bertrille, who had no companion of her own, said to me then:

"You will do well to leave us here; it is better that we should not be seen together in the village."

This annoyed me very much; but, since I felt it was reasonable, and was afraid of bringing reproaches upon Lina, I left them, after kissing them both,—Bertrille first, and then my sweetheart, with so long a kiss that Bertrille said to me laughing:

"You want to eat her up, don't you!"

At these words, I let go of Lina, and they went off. As for me, I turned to the left, and went down into the glen which comes from below Bars, and followed the brook of Thonac, which is nothing but a ditch, as far as the mill of La Grandie. At the spot where the Valmassingéas joins the valley of the Laurence and with it forms one great valley, I came across a man who was carrying on a stick over his shoulder something round, knotted in a handkerchief. When you meet someone on that day carrying a melon, you may be sure he comes from the celebration of Saint Rémy.

"So you are returning from it, too?" I asked him.

"Oh, yes," he answered, turning his head a little towards his melon, as much as to say: "You see it!"

Then we walked along, talking together. The man told me he came from Voulparie in the commune of Sergeac, and that he had just been to rub himself with Saint Rémy for an ailment in his head, which seized him from time to time and made him almost insane. Then he began to talk of the festival, and went on to remark that our curé was not there.

"All the same there were plenty there," I answered, "to eat the stew of the curé of Auriac."

"No doubt," returned the man, "but for all that, as a neighbor he ought to have been at this service, to which people come from so far. But they say that he's not much of a believer, and even that his conduct is none too good."

"And who says that?"

"They say it."

"Those who say it are idiots."

"In that case there are many idiots near my home; for the people do not hesitate to say it."

"And perhaps you are one of those that talk this way?"

"I? I only say what I have heard, but probably everyone in our parish, the curé first of all, would not say it if it were not true. When a rumor runs about like that, you can safely believe it, for there is no smoke without fire."

The blood had rushed to my head, and I scolded him roundly.

"As for the poor fools who stupidly believe everything their curé tells them, they can be forgiven, but as for him who knows as well as anyone that the curé Bonal is a fine man and a worthy priest, it is no small offense!"

And we continued to dispute and quarrel as we walked, I giving our curé all the praise he deserved, the man repeating all the evil he had heard about him. At last, opposite the little valley of Glaudou, on a

word which he let slip concerning Mlle. Hermine, I seized him violently by the collar and gave him a good shake:

"You rascally dog! I see clearly now that Saint Rémy is a rotten saint; it has been no use for you to rub your head with him, for you have remained more stupid than a donkey!"

And as he, on his side, had caught me by the collar of my blouse, we began to knock each other about as if we were fighting for a prize, while the melon rolled in the road.

The man was five or six years older than I, but all the same I flung him on the ground and beat his face with my fist, till I made his nose bleed. Having somewhat worked off my anger, I let him go. He got up, picked up his melon, which was a little bruised from falling, and, seeing he was not the stronger, went on his way, not without threatening to see me again.

"Whenever you like, you big fool!" I shouted after him.

And climbing the rocky slope through the undergrowth, thinly strewn with oaks, I was soon at Fanlac.

On arriving, I took pains not to meet the curé, but I ran right into him. He knew at once, from my torn blouse, that I had been fighting, and he asked me for what reason. I was a little embarrassed, not wishing to lie, not wishing either to tell him what it was all about. When he pressed me with questions, however, I ended by confessing the whole business:

"On my word, M. le curé, it was because of you!"

And I told him everything, except that the man had spoken of Mlle. Hermine.

"My boy," he said to me, when I had finished, "I am grateful to you for the feeling which led you to defend me, but another time you must be more patient: come, go change your clothes. . . ."

Fantille, to whom I also had to explain the rents in my blouse, was not of the same mind as the curé. She said I had done well to chastise that person.

"I will always patch you up, with a good will, when you have been torn on occasions like this!"

"Come, come, Fantille. You must be calmer, and learn how to endure injuries and slander."

"Oh, you, M. le curé! You would let yourself be loaded with insults without saying anything!"

The curé smiled slightly, and went off to write in his room.

As for me, I suspected that all these slanders, spread abroad by the curés at the instigation of the Jesuit preachers, boded us no good. "Without doubt," I said to myself, "they are trying to discredit him in advance, in order to prepare the people for some severe measure against the curé Bonal." It was my guess that they wanted to take him away from Fanlac, and send him off to some wretched little parish, since nothing could be more painful to him than to leave the dear parishioners who loved him so well. . . . But I did not really know his enemies and persecutors.

A few days later, another letter arrived, sealed, like

the first, with violet wax. When he had read it, the curé, who was master of himself, did not flinch. He refolded the letter, and went out to walk thoughtfully in the garden. An hour later, he went off to find the Chevalier.

The latter did not take matters as quietly as did the curé. As soon as he had learned what the trouble was, he cried out that it was an infamy and a piece of gross stupidity as well; that the Bishop must have lost his head to do such a thing as that, or that they had deceived him; that as for himself, he would never be seen again at mass—in his anger he shouted out the word—since the Tartuffes were shutting out of the Church the best curé in the diocese.

As the next day was Sunday, the curé ascended his pulpit for the last time. When he announced to his parishioners that, according to the decree of Monseigneur the Bishop, he was interdicted, and would never say mass again, not even on the present Sunday, nor would any longer administer the sacraments, there was an explosion of surprise in the crowded church, which continued in a dull murmur that the curé was for a moment unable to subdue.

When he had obtained silence, he explained that it was the duty of everyone, parishioners and curé, to submit to the authority of the Bishop; that as for himself, he would obey without resistance or murmur, although, since he had never acted in his own personal interest, but only for the peace of the Church, his conscience did not reproach him. But he added that

this obedience cost him dear, for he loved them all as if they were his children; he had hoped to tell them the word of God for many years longer, and in the end to rest in the little cemetery to which he had already conducted so many of them. In this strain he spoke at length, with so much affection and goodness that everyone was touched, and the women, with wet eyes, blew their noses hard. But this moment of emotion passed, and anger took its place. When church was out, the people gathered and told each other that they must not let the curé leave. One and all grew so excited that some of the most resolute went off to find the Chevalier de Galibert, who, though a good man, was always quick-tempered. The latter, seeing how affairs were moving, mounted to the steps of the old cross, and began to address the people. He told them that their curé's conduct, his patience, his resignation in these circumstances, proved how worthy he was of their affection and respect.

"But, we, his parishioners, surely have the right to behave a little differently. We remember that once the people elected the curés, and took part in the election of bishops and even of the popes. Because a few kings have had an understanding with certain of the latter, confiscating our ancient privileges, that is no reason why we should forget these rights. The whole parish, therefore, should address a petition to the Bishop, begging him to continue our curé's incumbency. But," he added, "since there are scarcely more than two or three here who can sign their names, we

shall do as they used formerly to do,—call a notary, who will draw up and enter a protest for us.

“Paper talks!”

“In the position in which we find ourselves, that is the best thing we can do. A dog can look at a bishop; we can at least speak to him. Are you of this opinion?”

“Yes, yes,” cried all who were there.

“Good! Then I shall send for the notary. As for you, come back at vespers. Be here, all of you, without fail; let no one stay at home. The more there are of us, the more weight it will carry. But I must tell you that people in authority, whether they wear a coat or a cassock, do not always see things as they should; so I am none too sure what will become of our protest. It may go into the stew-pot; it may go up in smoke. We shall see!

“We mustn’t stop sowing for fear of the pigeons!”

“As for myself, I have already said it,—if they take away our curé, I will never again put my foot in the church!”

“That’s right! That’s right! We won’t, either!”

“And if they send us another, he shall say his mass all by himself!

“A dog is valiant on his own ground; a cock on his own dunghill!”

Everybody applauded, and, an agreement having been reached, the Chevalier sent me to Montignac to find Maître Boyer, or someone in his stead.

At three o’clock, the notary arrived, and in the

square there, black with people, in the shade of the old elm where they had carried a table, he began to draw up the document and wrote his preamble. Then all the people of the parish, men and women, filed past him, the Chevalier at their head, and when he had placed on the document their names and surnames, he continued as follows:

“The above-mentioned, respectfully but firmly addressing Monseigneur the Bishop of Périgueux, quite as if he were present, have said and deposed that, since the re-establishment of the Catholic faith, the said curé Bonal has given in this parish an example of all the virtues; that he has edified it with his true and sincere piety; that for nearly thirty years he has been the providence of the poor, the friend and father of his parishioners, so that all, old and young, poor and rich, desire ardently to keep him as long as it may please God to leave him on this earth.

“Finally, the aforesaid witnesses earnestly supplicate Monseigneur the Bishop to revoke the orders that have been served by him, and to continue the said Sieur Bonal in his incumbency as curé of the parish of Fanlac; the said witnesses add that the mere example of their curé has made good Christians of all the members of this parish, and that since the welfare of religion is in accordance with their earnest desire to retain him, they hope that Monseigneur the Bishop will take their present request under consideration.

“And without in any way departing from the respect due Monseigneur the Bishop aforementioned, the

said witnesses protest very firmly, in case their request should have no effect, against the evil consequences that might result to religion and its ministers from a measure which injures them in their piety and their affection for their curé.

“‘Concerning all which, the said witnesses have requested me to draw up this document, which I have granted them under the royal seal,’ etc.”

And when he had had the two or three who were able to do so sign their names, the notary affixed his own signature with a learned flourish; for he was a notary of the old school, as his document showed.

Two days later, the Chevalier took a copy, superbly printed, and went off to Périgueux to give it to the Bishop.

The latter, as M. de Galibert saw, realized a little late that he had made a blunder; but as men in authority do not admit that they have been mistaken, bishops even less than others, the Monseigneur persisted in his decision, in spite of all the Chevalier, who pleaded warmly the cause of his friend, could say.

“I warn you, Monseigneur,” he said in parting, “that you will regret your refusal.

“‘He who now refuses.
Himself henceforth accuses.’”

The Bishop, who was considerably offended at the liberty taken by this layman, did not reply, and the Chevalier took his leave.

The evening before his return, the curé, who was

well acquainted with the thick heads of the clergy, and knew that the application of the Chevalier would be useless, had sent me to La Granval to get Le Rey to come and arrange matters with him. Three or four days later, Le Rey came, and, since his lease on the farm had only another year to run, he consented, in return for a small indemnity, to break it and retire to the property which he owned at La Boissonnerie. When everything had been agreed on, he returned home, and the curé began to think of leaving his house; for the Bishop's refusal, which was soon known to the whole parish, had inflamed the people, and he did not wish to be the occasion of any disorder.

It was understood between him and the Chevalier that I should accompany him to La Granval, as I had asked to be allowed to do. Moreover, in spite of the grief I felt at seeing him in such a situation, I was a little comforted at the thought of following him and being useful to him. I began to take away the furniture, which did not amount to much. Besides that which I have already mentioned, there was in the curé's room a very simple bed without curtains, a little table covered with a napkin on which stood a basin and water-pitcher of faience; another larger writing-table, covered with papers, a few books on a shelf, two chairs, a big, long trunk covered with wild boar's skin. That was all. Yet because of the bad roads, with Fantille's bed, a few provisions, and the remaining household goods, it took three days to carry everything away, a little at a time. I made

only one trip a day; besides, I was obliged to sleep at La Granval, for it was far, and the oxen were slow.

One morning, while I was loading the dresser on the cart, with the help of Cariol, I saw coming up a great devil of a curé, thin as a rail, with red skin, a wry neck, great round eyes, and a crooked nose, who asked me where the parsonage was.

"Here you are," I said, "this is the door."

And an instant later, I followed him in, to make sure it was the new curé. It was, precisely, he. With the usual politeness, he inquired on what day he could have his furniture, which was at Montignac, brought over.

"We shall have finished moving out to-morrow," said the curé Bonal, "and the day after to-morrow the parsonage will be free."

At that, with his usual courtesy, he offered his confrère some refreshment, which the other accepted hesitatingly, as if he feared to compromise himself. Then the curé called Fantille, and told her to prepare a light lunch. Fantille, however, instead of obeying, went out in a rage among all the houses of the village, saying that the priest who was to replace the curé had just arrived, and that he had the sort of face one would hate to meet in a corner of the woods. When she did not appear, the curé went out into the kitchen and told me to draw some wine, while he himself took the loaf of bread, with some nuts, in a

cloth. As I put the bottle on the table, the new curé was questioning his predecessor as to how much the benefice brought in, how much they paid for baptisms, marriages, burials, the blessing of new houses, and of the bed of the newly-married; whether the parishioners gave many presents, and whether there were many good, pious houses where they received the curés well.

"As for you," I thought, as I went off, "if you secure many presents, I shall be surprised!"

While the new curé was lunching, the women of the village, moved by curiosity, came one by one and two by two, to the little square, this one turning her spindle, that one knitting a stocking or weaving straw for a hat. There were soon a score of them, with their children clinging to their skirts, a few old, sickly men, and even La Ramée, who was smoking his pipe.

At the end of half or three-quarters of an hour, if I am not mistaken, the new curé crossed the square on his way home, and all these people watched him askance.

"Well, my good fellow," he said, as he passed La Ramée, "you're smoking your pipe?"

And, as the old soldier, without answering, continued to regard him with disfavor, he added:

"You're not much of a talker!"

"That depends."

"Then perhaps I do not please you?"

"It is possible."

"You are very free-spoken."

"I am like that."

When he saw that La Ramée continued to blow puffs of smoke, without uttering another word, that the men did not salute him, and the women pretended not to see him, the astonished curé muttered something between his teeth, and went off.

While he was still within earshot, Cariol shouted from the cart to La Ramée:

"What do you think of that puppy?"

"He's not bad, for what I want to do to him!"

The next day the curé Bonal made the round of all the houses of the commune to say good-bye to everyone, going into the fields to speak to the men at work, and forgetting no one, rich or poor. In the evening he returned, tired out, looked sadly at the empty parsonage, and went off to take supper and sleep at the Chevalier's house.

According to what Toinette told me, it was a sad supper, none of the three having any appetite for food.

"What consoles me in this misfortune," said the curé, "is my knowing that my poor will not suffer, my dear Chevalier, and that you and Mlle. Hermine will take my place worthily."

"My poor curé! Yes, I will try to replace you as far as concerns material charity, but in the matter of spiritual consolation, of those kind words that help the unfortunate patiently to endure their troubles, of those charitable exhortations that support the weak

. . . who will replace you? I know well what ought to be said, but I cannot find the right words. . . .”

“Then,” said the curé, “in that matter I am sure Mlle. Hermine will replace me.”

“Certainly,” she said, “I will do gladly all that I can.”

And they were silent, those brave hearts.

The next day, after breakfast, the curé Bonal took his stick, and, accompanied by his hosts, set off in the direction of La Granval. All three walked slowly, as if to put off the moment of separation. When they reached the crossroads, where a stone cross has stood from ancient times, the curé stopped and they gave each other their final farewells. The Chevalier, less resigned than his companions, kept protesting against the decision of the Bishop, while Mlle. Hermine, who had drawn out her handkerchief, wiped her eyes, and the curé, with lowered eyes, kept tapping the earth with his stick.

“My friends,” he observed, raising his head, “we should not be good Christians if we were not able to endure injustice. This holy emblem,” he added, pointing to the cross, “teaches us resignation. May God’s will be done!”

And when they had embraced each other fraternally, the curé began to descend the steep valley. The stones in the road rolled under his feet, and he leaned heavily upon his stick to support himself. Little by little his tall figure grew smaller in the distance, until he finally disappeared in the wooded bottom. Then the Cheva-

lier and his sister, who had followed him with their eyes, returned sadly to their home.

About five o'clock in the evening the curé reached La Granval, where, with the help of Fantille, I had already got everything fairly well in order. The ancient house was quite large; there was a vast kitchen, a large room where you could have put four beds, and two smaller rooms. The curé gave a glance at the arrangements, and seemed to be recalling, under the old family roof, memories of his childhood, for he remained a long time pensive before the fire.

As the supper hour drew near, Fantille put a cloth at the upper end of the table, placed the curé's napkin, and then poured out the soup.

"From now on," he said, as he watched her, "we shall all eat together. No longer is there any curé here, obliged, because of his position, to observe certain conventions; there is only Pierre Bonal, son of a peasant, become a peasant again. To-morrow Virelou will come to make me some other clothes."

"What!" cried Fantille, clasping her hands, "you are going to put off the cassock, M. le curé!"

"Certainly, since I am no longer a curé, and it is forbidden me to wear it. . . . Come, put the plates on the table for yourself and Jacquou."

Fantille hesitated, no longer knowing where she was; but finally she obeyed.

Then the curé rose, approached the table, made the sign of the cross, and recited the Benedicite.

When he had finished, he sat down, took the big spoon and served us each, Fantille and me, with a full dish of soup, after which he helped himself less plentifully.

After supper we talked of the way in which we should manage the property, and I gave the curé my ideas on the subject. I assured him that I was quite capable of doing the work well alone, but he replied that he did not intend to remain idle; in spite of his more than sixty years, he was robust and counted on helping me. About eight o'clock I fed the oxen, for Le Rey, as is the custom, had left the lease of cattle which he had received on taking over the farm. After that, we each went to bed.

Before I fell asleep, I thought for a long time about how I could manage the farm most profitably. I understood that we should have to go carefully and work hard, for the property was not large, worth at the most about twelve thousand francs, and the land, right in the middle of the forest, was none of the best. But I did not lack courage, and I was proud and happy to be of service to the curé, and show him my gratitude. Then, as I must admit, although I was greatly grieved over the misfortune that had fallen on him, the joy of feeling myself nearer to Lina gave me strength. Certainly if the matter had depended on me, I should have gone back with the curé to Fanlac, well pleased to see him happy. But as that was not possible, I consoled myself with remembering how near I was to my sweetheart. Man

is at heart an egoist; all he can do is to conquer himself when duty commands it.

The next day Virelou came, and four days later, the curé was dressed like a good peasant in heavy brown cloth, and a Périgord hat, with round crown and large brim.

It was a Sunday. He persuaded Fantille and me to go to the early mass at Fossemagne, saying that he would keep house while we were gone, for he heard that his presence in church might make a scene.

"But the soup!" exclaimed Fantille, who could never get used to seeing him dressed in this fashion.

"Fear nothing; I'll stir the fire under the pot."

She clasped her hands and raised her eyes to the rafters, as if to say:

"Good God! What shall we see next!"

We had scarcely returned from mass, Fantille and I, when at the edge of the clearing, from the direction of La Mazière, we saw the Chevalier coming out of the wood on his mare, which he was urging into a fast trot. A moment later he dismounted in the court, and warmly grasped the curé's hands.

"I have come to dine with you," he said.

"Welcome, welcome, my old friend."

And while I led the mare to the stable, they walked around the house.

"Fortunately there is a fowl in the soup!" said Fantille, bustling about as I came back.

While they were lunching together, the Chevalier told his friend what had happened on the arrival of

the new curé, and of the bad impression he had made on the people:

"I feel sure," he added, "that he will not have many at his mass, this morning."

"So much the worse," replied the curé. "I am very grateful to the whole parish for the affection they have shown me on this occasion, but religion must not suffer because of personal preferences."

Hearing this, as she went about her business, Fantille shook her head, as a sign of her disapproval.

The Chevalier was a good table companion, and did honor to the fowl in the pot, to the stuffing with which it was garnished, and the omelet that followed it. He cheered up the meal a little by throwing out a few of his familiar sayings. For instance, when the curé, who did not drink unmixed wine, absent-mindedly offered him water before serving himself, the Chevalier thanked him after this fashion:

"Water ruins the wine; a cart, the road; Lent, the human body."

They sat a long time talking at table, the Chevalier twirling his snuff-box, and taking frequent pinches; the curé, his knife in his hand, tracing vague geometric figures on the cloth; each enjoying the pleasures of friendship after his own manner. The Chevalier, though happy in the present moment, did not forget his grievances, and expressed himself very freely on the subject of the Bishop, who had injured his friend and his curé; as for his successor, he was not worth flinging to the dogs.

The curé Bonal, who had perhaps felt more keenly the blow of the separation from everything that he loved, had, however, more resignation, and endeavored, in the interest of religion, to mollify the Chevalier.

"My friend," he said, "first of all you must get acquainted with your new curé. He has not been at Fanlac eight days yet; you have seen him twice; how can you know his real worth? You say he has a bad face, but he may be a good priest for all that. You know as well as I that you cannot judge people by their looks; appearances are often deceitful."

"Yes," said the Chevalier. "Do not believe a ribald because he swears, or a woman because she weeps; for a ribald can always swear, and a woman can weep whenever she wishes."

The former curé smiled a little, and the Chevalier continued:

"Besides, I am never mistaken. When you came to Fanlac, in spite of your dark face and rather rough air, I said at once, 'There is a fine fellow of a curé!' Was I mistaken?"

"My dear friend," said Bonal, taking the hand of the Chevalier across the table.

At vesper-time, having passed several happy hours at La Granval, M. de Galibert got into the saddle to return to Fanlac, loaded with wishes for a good journey and warm greetings to his sister.

He had not been mistaken on the subject of the new curé's mass. A man from Escourtaudie, whom I met several days afterwards at Thenon, where I

had been to buy some sheep, told me that there had not been even a cat there, so to speak. But that was nothing compared with what happened a little later. A man at La Galube having died suddenly, his relatives, not daring to do without the priest, went, much against their will, to speak to the new curé about the burial. The latter told them it would cost fifteen francs, and twenty if he went to take the body from the house. The dead man's son and son-in-law thought this very dear, especially since the practice of paying had lapsed, long years since, with the curé Bonal. So they tried bargaining, in the hope of making the curé come down in his price. But he protested that that was the tariff, and that he did not have the right to make any reduction.

"For all that," said one of the sons, "since the curé Bonal remitted the whole price, surely you have the right to remit half of it."

This reasoning put the curé in a bad humor.

"I do not know how my predecessor acted," he replied sharply, "but it is as I have told you: take it or leave it."

Finally, after having argued a long time, and brought in from one side or another all the usual points of men who are making a bargain, and after having gone out to consult together, they came back and agreed, on condition that he should take forty sous off the price; to this he consented. Only—and it was there that the whole affair came to grief—he told them that they must pay in advance, for he had

lost a great deal of money in his former parish, because often when the last rites had been performed and the dead buried, the heirs turned a deaf ear to the question of payment, so obdurately that it had been sometimes necessary to hale them before a justice of the peace and have a judgment against them.

"Hang it!" thought the dead man's relatives. "He is no fool, that curé!"

Although far from pleased, they would have paid the money if they had had it; for it meant a great deal to them, as it does to most peasants, to have the curé pay the last honors to their father. But they did not have the money. So they were obliged to return, telling the curé that since this was the way things stood, they would have to go without the service for the dead.

But a few hours later, a dozen young men came to toll the knell, and, finding the cords pulled up out of reach and the inner door of the belfry locked, they went to ask the key from the sacristan, who replied that the curé had forbidden him to hand it over. So they forced open the door of the belfry with axes and began to ring the two bells. The curé came to drive them away, but he was obliged to retreat hastily and lock himself up in his house. At the sound of the bells, however, the village people came from all directions, and soon in the rough road leading up to the village you could see far off a coffin covered with a white cloth, carried on the shoulders of four men, who frequently shifted the burden to others; for the

ascent was steep, and it was a hot day. When he left, the curé had double-locked the large door of the church, so that the men ringing the bells were imprisoned. When the corpse reached the church, it was placed before the portal on chairs loaned by the neighbors; then they went to the curé to get the key. But the house was closed, and no one answered. For all that, those inside must have been deaf not to hear, for after knocking with their fists and sticks, the men ended by flinging stones at the door and windows. Anger inflamed them all; exclamations, scarcely restrained by the presence of the dead, burst out amid their sullen mutterings. On the rough faces of these peasants was to be seen the indignation aroused in them by the refusal of what they asked for: the honors paid to one of themselves. Already the boldest were talking of forcing open the parsonage and dragging out the curé, when those who were shut up in the church managed to take off the lock and opened both sides of the door. Then the coffin was carried in front of the choir to its usual place; the candles were lighted around it, according to custom, and the sacristan, who had been brought there in spite of himself, sang the service for the dead, clad in a cope and trembling with fear. After that, they compelled him to swing incense over the corpse and sprinkle it, just as the curé would have done. And when everything was finished at the church, they set out to the cemetery, where the poor sacristan, who thought he was committing sacrilege, was again obliged to go through

with the last ceremonies, even to the final shovelful of earth, when the coffin had been lowered into the grave.

While all this was going on, the Chevalier, who was very persistent, had been to Périgueux to make a final appeal to the Bishop, and to show him the harm that his decision was doing to religion, since the curé was saying his mass to empty benches.

"It is to be feared," he added, "that on the first opportunity some disorder will arise, so indignant are the parishioners over the departure of the curé Bonal, and so badly disposed towards his successor, who seems to be trying hard to make him still more regretted."

But it was in vain for the poor Chevalier to plead and argue the cause of religion and of his friend. The Bishop made him understand that, in spite of any consideration the Church might feel for the pious laymen, she could not be governed by their opinion.

"As a gentleman, I regret personally not to be able to grant your request, M. le Chevalier, but what I have decided upon in the fullness of my episcopal authority is irrevocable."

As a consequence of this burial, the gendarmes came to Fanlac and made an investigation. Then the King's agents took away and questioned a great number of people. Many arrests were made, and finally there were a dozen sentences of from six months to five years in prison.

The curé Bonal was greatly distressed over this

wretched affair. At no opportunity did he fail to tell and have others tell his former parishioners to be patient, and not to fight against the inevitable; but it was useless. The sentences drove them into full revolt. The new curé saw this and, vexed because his church was always empty, besides believing himself none too safe since one evening when he had been almost hit on the head with a stone, finally asked to be sent away. This request was granted, and the parish remained without a curé, to the confusion of certain people who had incited the whole affair.

Thus was verified the rather obscure prediction of the Chevalier, who had said:

“A time will come when the foxes will need their tails.”

CHAPTER VI

WE, however, were very peaceful at La Granval. This life close to the soil agreed with me. I loved to drive my Limousin oxen over the field, which the plow was breaking up, plunging my sabots into the fresh earth, and being followed by all our hens which came to eat the worms in the turned-up soil. Even the hard work of the summer season, such as mowing and grafting, delighted me. It was good for me to use my strength, and when in the morning, after I had done a day's mowing in the field, I saw the grass wet with dew, cut smooth and closely-shorn, I was happy. Then I took my whetstone, and sharpened my scythe on it, as I whistled the air of a song. In the evening, during the harvest, after I had loaded the last stack of grain on the cart, I would feel a stir of pride as I saw all this wheat that was to become good, tasty brown bread, and remembered it was I who had done all, or nearly all, the work of growing it. For Bonal helped me all that he could, though at his age a man cannot take up much heavy work. He drove the cart, helped me to make hay and bind the sheaves; he pruned the vines and did other things like that. At Fanlac he had always loved to cultivate the garden, and he put in order the garden

of La Granval, which was in bad condition, as is the usual case in our part of the country, where we are so pressed for time that we do the most essential work first.

So we lived on peacefully, scarcely seeing anyone. Our nearest neighbors were quite far away and separated from us by woods, so that their chickens never bothered us, nor ours them,—an excellent way of living in peace; for it is well known that in villages three-quarters of the quarrels start over the chickens which have gone to scratch in other people's gardens. Moreover, we did not mind being isolated. When you are occupied from sunrise to sunset, you do not feel the need of seeing strangers. Besides, Jean, the charcoal-burner, who had grown too old to spend his nights watching the furnaces in the woods, had retired to his house in Maurezies, having laid by a little money; and he sometimes came to see us. He was a good, obliging man, as he had shown himself to be in my father's case, and since that time he had taken an interest in me. He gave me advice on the management of the property, which I was very glad to get; for although I knew quite well how to do all the necessary work of a farm, I had not enough experience to direct it wisely on every occasion, and for this reason the good man was a great help to me. The curé liked him at once, and used to talk to him in patois, because Jean, who was quite untaught, could not even speak French—as was the case with most of the people in our district. But since he had lived so much alone

in the middle of the woods, he had grown accustomed to think rather than to talk; so that the few words he let fall were full of wisdom. The curé was not a great talker either, but everything he said was full of substance; so they understood each other well. Jean, however, was most respectful to him, as can easily be understood; and, like us, called him always "Monsieur le curé."

But in regard to this, the curé told us one day that we must correct our way of speaking. Since he was no longer curé, either in right or in fact, we ought not to call him so.

"Good, holy Virgin!" cried Fantille. "For twenty years I have called you that; I shall never be able to speak to you in any other way."

"You will grow accustomed to it. Call me, all of you, by my name, Bonal."

"That I could never do," answered Fantille. "No, M. le. . . Listen, since you do not wish us to call you that any longer, I shall call you 'our Monsieur.'"

"That is all right," he said, smiling a little. "And you two," he added, turning towards Jean and me, "if you will, please call me Bonal."

So from then on, according to his wish, we called him this. Sometimes my tongue tripped from force of habit, but I caught myself quickly, knowing that it would renew his pain to hear himself called "Monsieur le curé."

You may be sure that during all these changes, I

had not forgotten Lina. The second Sunday after our arrival at La Granval, I went to mass at Bars. The curé was reading the gospel as I arrived, and I stayed in the back of the church, looking about everywhere for my sweetheart. By searching carefully, I finally caught sight of her to the right of the preacher's pulpit, but she was not alone. Her mother was with her. I confess that as long as the mass lasted I scarcely followed the ceremonies of the curé, I was so much occupied in watching the round neck of my Lina, slightly tanned, as a girl's neck becomes when she works in the fields, and the little curls, with their bronze glints, that slipped out from under her Sunday head-dress. When the congregation was going out, I took my place before the door and waited. People were moving about over the square in little groups, and after the first greeting and salutations, were beginning to talk together, the men about the weather, the appearance of the crops, the price of cattle at the last market-day in Thenon; the women about their washing or the success of their capon stew; and the girls about their sweethearts.

All at once Lina come out, and gave a start on seeing me. But her mother did not recognize me, as was not surprising; for she had not seen me since I watched the geese with her daughter. They stopped to talk like the others, her mother with another woman, Lina with Bertrille, who, at a certain moment, turned to look at me, making me realize that they were talking about me. A moment later, Bertrille wandered

carelessly in my direction, and passing close to where I was walking about, staring at the weathercock in the belfry, said to me in a low voice:

"After vespers, her mother will not be there."

"Good!"

And I went off to watch them play ninepins, turning my eyes from time to time towards Lina.

Towards three o'clock, when vespers were over, the two girls stayed for quite a while talking, to let the people behind them get ahead; then they slipped off quietly, and I, making a detour through another road, overtook them.

How we laughed, clasped hands and chatted, as if we should never stop! Then, since they were eager to find out how I came to be there, I had to tell them everything that had happened to the curé Bonal and explain that we had come to live on his property at La Granval. They could not get over their astonishment at hearing that a curé could cease to be a curé and take off his cassock. As for making them understand that it was all because he had sworn allegiance at the time of the Revolution, and what this oath was, that was no easy matter. So I told them briefly that certain other curés, called Jesuits, who were great enemies of the old patriotic curés, had ruined him.

"Jesuits!" They had never heard of them.

"And what are these Jesuits?" they asked.

"According to what M. le Chevalier de Galibert says, they are like foxes among the other curés."

They began to laugh, and I to talk of pleasanter

things. I made Lina understand that since we were neighbors, with only an hour and a half of roadway between us, we could see each other more often, and how happy I was at the thought. This delighted her too, but she feared that her mother might notice our friendship, and forbid her to speak to me.

"We will try not to let her suspect anything," I said, "and perhaps, after all, she might not be angry anyway, for she must know it is impossible to keep a boy and a girl who are in love from seeing one another. But if she should happen to disapprove, there will still be time to decide what to do; so don't be afraid!"

And we walked along slowly, all three of us, talking, on the stony road, bordered with ragged hedges that were mixed with bushes and brambles, I in the center with my arms in theirs, and, to tell the truth, pressing Lina's a little the more warmly. When the road went through some clump of oaks, I put my arm about the waist of my sweetheart, and, pressing her gently to me, I kissed her cheek, browned by the sun, and velvety as a lovely peach from the orchard. The moments flew, and we were at Puypautier before we knew it; but Bertrille, ever cautious, gave us warning, and we had to leave each other after many farewells, kisses and loving glances. In order not to be seen, I turned to the left across the underbrush, and went by way of La Grimaudie so as to get back to La Granval.

This programme went on for some time without

any interruption. Whenever I was able, I went to Bars on Sunday, and walked home with the girls. Poor Bertrille was herself without a companion, for her own sweetheart was with his regiment. But she possessed her soul in patience, as the women of Périgord do when the troops are in the field. As she never left us, no one could say there was anything wrong about our meetings. But there are evil tongues everywhere, even at Bars. Someone noticed our little intrigue, and told Lina's mother; so that one Sunday, when mass was over, I became aware that she was staring hard at me. She was not angry with her daughter, however; she only asked her who I was, where I lived, and what I did.

When Lina had frankly told her everything, her mother said she did not mind if I spoke to her, provided it was always in an honorable way. And she added, that they needed a workman in their house, big and strong like myself, who could cultivate their property, now that G  ral was growing old.

When mass was over, I noticed that the good woman was looking at me with a hospitable air, which caught my attention because she was not usually amiable. So, in my stupidity, I began to think that, although we were not old enough to be married, she did not mind my talking to her daughter while we waited. And one Sunday, I was certain of it, when, passing purposely by me, with Lina and Bertrille, she said too me:

“Since you walk home with them on other Sundays,

you can certainly come to-day; you are not afraid of me, are you?"

"Why no, Mathive! Then, with your permission, we will walk along together."

On our way home, while the two girls walked ahead, Lina's mother spoke to me of her affairs, and told me how hard it was for her to manage their property, since G  ral no longer left the chimney-corner. She hired day-laborers, but it was not the same thing; she needed a strong young fellow like myself. And all this while she kept looking at me as if to say that I would do very well. Since I did not reply to this, she asked me, in reference to something else, if I should not like to come and live with them, letting me understand that, since we loved each other, Lina and I could be married some day. But while she said this, she looked at me in a way that I thought rather bold, as if she had spoken in her own behalf.

At last, a little weary of her grimaces, I said to her:

"Listen, Mathive! I love Lina more than I can say. And for that reason I should be very glad to come to your house, to work for you with all my strength, and cultivate your land; but just now I am needed at La Granval, and that being so, I should be a cur to abandon the cur   Bonal, who rescued me from beggary, just at this time when he wants me."

"You are right," she said. And we spoke of other things.

For a long time matters went on like this. Nearly every Sunday I went to Bars, and often met Lina and

her mother. It did not please me to have Mathive always there, but I was patient, infinitely preferring to see my sweetheart before her mother than not to see her at all. The latter, moreover, continued well-disposed towards me, letting a word drop now and then to show me she was glad to see me. She always put her daughter to the front—in words; but from her looks and her over-friendly airs, I finally came to understand that this woman, late in life, had been seized with a passion for young men. In order not to quarrel with her, I acted like a simpleton who did not understand, and I pretended not to notice when she would press up against me in walking, as if the road were too narrow. Because of all this, instead of accompanying them home, I often went back to La Granval on some pretext, after I had had a word with Lina, while her mother was buying a cake to make a sweet dish for old Géral.

In our house everything was going well. I worked like anything, rising at daybreak and going to bed the last of all. Fantille, who was still strong, raised the chickens, fed the pigs, and did all the work of the home that was proper for a woman. Our former curé Bonal did all he could himself to help me, caring for the oxen, watching the sheep, learning the farmwork, and never sparing himself trouble.

As for the sheep, it vexed me to see him drive the fifteen or twenty that we owned, and take the position of a mere shepherd; and one day I said so to him:

"But why not?" he asked, almost gayly, "it is my trade!"—referring, I think, to his former office of curé. He had determined to learn farming, and he had succeeded very quickly. Sometimes, when he had made some passable furrows, I would say, to divert him, but with no lack of the respect I owed him:

"That's well done! One might think you had never done anything else!"

"Jacquou, my boy, you are a flatterer!" And he added: "When we have done all we are able to do, we have done our duty."

But when I saw him caught in some difficult job, I would say to him:

"Do leave that; it is too hard for you who are unused to it."

But he answered that he was still robust, that work did him good and gave him some peace of soul.

"You see, Jacquou," he said, "man is born for work; it is a law of nature; and since that is so, there is no work more healthy and good for the soul than work on the soil. The more one comes in contact with it, the more has one to be grateful for, from the point of view of both bodily and spiritual health."

And he went on to say beautiful things to me on this subject, showing me that one of the conditions of happiness was to live as a free man on your own land, from the fruit of your own labor.

"As the Chevalier says, 'freedom and bread are the first of blessings.' To eat the bread kneaded by your own housewife and made from wheat which you have

sown yourself; to taste the fruit of the tree which you have grafted; to drink the wine from the vine you have planted; to live in the midst of nature, which calls you unceasingly to calm and the moderation of your desires, far from the cities where what passes for happiness is merely artificial,—the wise man asks nothing more. . . . ”

And sometimes, when he had spoken thus, he would stay for a long time dreaming, as if he were regretting something.

On Sunday, as I have said, Bonal did not go to church; he wished to avoid the disturbance his presence might have caused. He would walk along one of the ancient avenues of chestnut trees, which began at the court of the house and ended at the extremity of the clearing of La Granval, where it was closed by a great horse-chestnut, planted in the middle. He would sit down in the shadow of this tree on a bench he had made, and meditate. His spirit had grown serene once more, and he could think of the wrongs he had suffered, with none of those first unhappy pangs, but with that tranquil philosophy which accepts, without censure, the accidents of human life. But though he was resigned when he thought of himself alone, whenever he thought of his old friends, the Chevalier and his sister, and of his parishioners who loved him, of the poor, whose providence and consolation he had been, sorrow gripped his heart and he was obliged to make a great effort to overcome it.

He would have loved dearly to see all his friends

back there, but he did not return; for the excellent reason that they would never have let him come away again. So he was very happy when the Chevalier came to lunch at La Granval and brought the news of his former parish. Although he had never been much of a talker, he was then full of endless questions, about this one or that one,—what had become of this man; was that old woman still alive; was the daughter of that other one married? And when his solicitude had been satisfied, they would both speak of former days and exchange old memories. When the Chevalier had remounted his mare, laden with kind messages for everyone and with some tobacco for La Ramée, the poor ex-curé seemed easier in his mind.

Nearly every Sunday, Jean came to spend the day at La Granval and keep Bonal company. That diverted him a little, for since Jean was an old man, he recalled the things of his youth, and sometimes, at a word, there would waken in him the memory of long forgotten events. On these days Jean stayed to supper, and at table in the evening Bonal would talk to us of one thing and another, and would entertain us with curious tales and observations that we should never have thought of making by ourselves.

For instance, he told us the meaning of the names of the surrounding villages, and of men's names.

"Thus, Fossemagne," he told us one day, "means Great Ditch; Fromental, the country of cheese; and your name, Jacquou of Ferral, seems to indicate a metal-worker at one of those hand-forges, formerly

common in our part of the country. As for the surname of Croquant, which you have carried from father to son, you know what that comes from."

"And that name of Maurezies, Jean's village," I asked him, "what does that mean?"

"There are some who derive it from the Moors or Saracens who once made raids into our country; but I would rather admit that I do not know. On the other hand, I can tell you that this village may well be the place where Saint Avit lost his companion Benedictus, as is told in the chronicle of the diocese."

Bonal also showed us the resemblance between certain words in our patois and the Breton tongue; he told us of our ancestors the Gauls, of their religion and customs. He related the uprisings of the Croquants of Périgord under Henry IV and Louis XIII, and also all the old tales of the Barade forest, which he knew intimately.

So the moments of leisure at La Granval passed profitably, while Bonal began to grow accustomed to his new life.

At first he was very sad, and scarcely spoke; but little by little his grief grew less, and if we started him very gently on a subject, he would let himself go, and entertain us, principally with things of the past. And then he was so good that he would have done just the same to oblige us, even if he himself had felt no desire. When I saw how everything was going on fairly well, I worked without anxiety, content to be near Lina, without remembering that I

had also come closer to the Comte de Nansac, or rather, without being disturbed at this proximity.

Sometimes, I heard far off in the forest the hunter's horn urging on his dogs, and then the memory of all my misfortunes would rush back, and my hatred reawaken, always hot, always violent, in spite of all the exhortations which the former curé had once given me. It was the only thing in which I had not gained control over myself, so strongly did I feel that I should be a bad son, if I forgave the Nansacs. Besides, I was not afraid of anything, for I felt like a full-crested young cock, strong enough to defend myself.

It was not long before I made proof of my strength. One winter evening, I was coming back from cutting heather to make bedding for our cattle. The day was drawing to its close, and in the woods that bordered on the road I was following the darkness was descending slowly. I was walking noiselessly, my pickax over my shoulder, thinking of my Lina, when all at once I heard behind me the hurried steps of a horse.

The idea came into my mind immediately that it was the Comte de Nansac, but I continued to walk without turning. I was not mistaken. When he had come within a few yards of me, he called out insolently:

"Hola! rascal! Get out of my way!"

The blood rushed to my head as if I had been struck by a whip, but I pretended not to have heard; only when I felt on my neck the breath from the

horse's nostrils I whirled about, and, catching the bridle with my left hand, I raised my pickax with the other:

"Do you want to crush the son after making the father perish in the galleys? Tell me, you wicked Crozat!"

Never in my life have I seen a man so astonished. Usually the peasants hastened to get out of his way, whenever he passed, for fear of being knocked down, or at least of getting a blow from his whip. So he was thoroughly astounded. But what put him most out of countenance was that name of Crozat, that had been so carefully concealed—the name of his grandfather, the corrupt tax-collector—which the son of the peasant flung in his teeth, giving him back insolently his own familiar "thee" and "thou."

He thrust his whip into his boot, and pulled out his hunting-knife. The horse, a nervous animal, tossed its head and pawed the earth.

"Let go my horse's bridle, you miserable black-guard!"

I trembled with anger:

"Not before I have spat in your face once more, villain, the name of your grandfather, Crozat, the thief!"

And, letting go the plunging horse's bridle, I leaped backwards into the hedge, still holding my upraised pickax.

He stayed there a moment, pale and cold with anger, his eyes venomous, grinding his teeth, and trying to

ride me down. But although he spurred the horse brutally up to me, it recoiled in fear at the sight of the uplifted pickax. Then, seeing that he could not approach me from the front, and that the dense thicket protected me from behind, the Count sheathed his hunting-knife and went off, calling out:

"You will pay dearly for this, vermin!"

"I laugh at you, Crozat!"

Again this name which inflamed him! He spurred his horse and disappeared.

When I told them at home about this event, Bonal was very much disturbed, foreseeing that this man, who was so proud and unscrupulous, would try to avenge himself ruthlessly on the poor peasant who had humiliated him.

"You must be on your guard," he told me, "and not venture into the neighborhood of l'Herm; and above all you must not go over his land or through his woods."

The first time the Chevalier came to see us, after this affair, Bonal told him the whole story.

When he had heard it, he said by way of comment:

"That does not surprise me; 'Great lords and great highways are very bad neighbors.' I know that this Nansac is a great lord of contraband, but those are not the best lords. One would say," he added, "that it was inherited from the château. The lords of l'Herm have always been more or less tyrannical; witness him of the Wax Hand."

"Ah, yes! That's a true legend of the north tower,"

said Bonal, "but even if it should be only a tale, I believe what I have already said to Jacquou, that he must be on his guard against that evil fellow."

"That's my opinion too," said the Chevalier, "I am not alarmed, however. He is big enough to defend himself. Undoubtedly, the Count has some advantages over him, such as being better armed, but 'Brave man, short sword!'"

In accordance with this advice, and also with my own idea of what was best, I took certain precautions from that time forth. Whenever I went in those regions where I ran the risk of meeting the Comte de Nansac, I carried a good cudgel, or else an old flint-lock musket which had belonged to Bonal's grandfather, but which he himself had never used, since never in his life, he said, had he killed any living creature. In addition, whether I was near or far from the house I always had in my pocket my father's knife, the blade of which measured about six thumb-lengths, and with which I had made Mascret give way when I was still only a child. Having taken these precautions, I went for six or eight months without seeing the Count, except once, at a distance. At one time or another I did indeed see Mascret or the other guard, who had the air of spying on me from afar; but I did not trouble myself about them, for I had something else in my mind which distracted my attention from them.

When you are in love, all your thoughts turn to-

wards your sweetheart, and your steps follow your thoughts; so I lost no opportunity of seeing Lina. Her mother was still trying to wheedle me, and to achieve this, she rigged herself out the best she could—and was all the uglier for it. I used to laugh at this by myself, thinking of the Chevalier's saying: "A golden bridle for the old mule."

Sometimes on Sunday, still pursuing her idea, she would invite me to come in with them, when we had returned from mass, and even at times to have supper with them. I understood her tricks, but did not refuse, for I wished to be as long as possible with Lina. After dinner, the old woman would take me walking about the property, on the pretext of seeing how the crops were coming on. While we were walking about, and Lina was busy with the housework, she always found some means of letting me know that she liked me and that she wished I were living with them. She would point out to me an uncultivated field or a vine they had not had time to dress a second time, for lack of a man in the house.

"It's a pity," she would say, "that things are so that you cannot leave La Granval. You see, we have a large property that would bring in double the income if we had a strong young man like you in the house. And then, in working for us, you would be working for yourself, since Lina likes you, and we have only her in the family."

She showed me not only the farm, but the stables,—the loft full of wheat, the cellar where there were a

score of half-kegs of wine, part of it old, for G ral always had had the custom of putting aside a portion of each vintage to let it mature. She also showed me the linen closets, full of linen, and the cabinets, full of things. One day she even opened a little drawer in the big dresser, the key of which she always carried, and pointed out a small leather sack full of louis, as if that would decide me to come.

“All that would belong to you later, my friend!”

When the devil gets hold of women of that age, he makes them lose their senses, for Mathive, who was forty-seven or forty-eight years old, and far from beautiful, with broken teeth, a sharp nose, and reddened eyes, imagined that by showing me she was rich she could render me blind and rascally at the same time.

When I found myself alone with Lina, I told her everything her mother was doing to get me to come to them, but naturally I did not explain to her the reason for so much kindness. And then the poor girl said to me:

“Look, Jacquou, I love you dearly, and you can imagine how happy I’d be to have you live with us until we can be married; but if you did such a thing as that, if you abandoned a man like the cur  Bonal who rescued you from black poverty and taught you everything you know, I should never speak to you again.”

“Don’t worry, Lina. I would cut off one of my fingers rather than do such a shameful thing.”

And yet how happy I should have been to live beside her and work for her! Mathive sometimes asked me—always with the same purpose—to help them with the harvests or to dig about the vines, or to help with some other urgent piece of work. And I often went, with the permission of the curé; for I was always glad to help them, and especially joyful to be near Lina. Then, when I had come to help them with work in the winter, I would peel the chestnuts with them during the evening, and I used to go away late, for Lina would never set the brands upright in the fireplace, as the girls do when they wish to dismiss their lovers.

One day as I arrived early to help them gather grapes, Lina was getting ready to make bread. I watched her while I ate a shoot of garlic and a grape before going into the vineyard. First, she arranged her headkerchief so as to cover all her hair; then she turned back her sleeves to the shoulder, and soaped her arms and hands thoroughly in warm water, and rinsed them with cold water which I poured over them with the funnel of the drinking-horn. Then, when she had carefully cleaned her nails, she prepared the yeast, poured out the flour and the warm water, and began to knead. It was a joy to watch her. First, she worked the flour with her hand, mixing it carefully with the water; then when the mixture had thickened, she took it, raised almost whole armfuls of it, and flung it back heavily into the trough. Her beautiful round arms, a little tanned above the wrists,

a pretty rosy white a little higher up, plunged vigorously into the sticky dough, which clung to her skin and which she scraped off with a finger. "Ah!" I thought, as I watched her like this, "what a pleasure to put a knife into the floury loaf, and to eat your housewife's tasty bread,—this bread which she has made with her own hands and which she has perfumed with the sweet aroma of her flesh! What happiness to gather about the family table, children and all together, and eat this bread of good white flour, in which she has put some of her affection!" And, dreaming in this fashion, I already saw Lina and myself dining with a troop of little children.

But life does not follow men's dreams. That would be too happy, or perhaps at times too unfortunate. Mathive had talked to me for a long time about her plans, and made me glow with hopes that delighted my heart, although I saw clearly that she was not frank in speaking to me about Lina; so ready are we to let ourselves be duped in such a matter! But it was not long before she changed her tune. One Sunday—it was Candlemas—as I was in the square before the church at Bars, waiting as usual for mass to be over, the old woman approached me, and, drawing me to one side, told me, without any more trifling, that since I had refused several times to do as she asked, she had hired a laborer; I must therefore understand that the plans she had proposed could no longer be considered. She was very sorry, as she had always preferred me.

"At present," she concluded, "it is no longer suitable for you to talk to Lina."

When I heard that, I stood there dumbfounded, staring at her fixedly, as if I had not understood. I quickly recovered myself, however, and said that even if I was no longer permitted to speak to her daughter, no one on earth could prevent me from loving her as long as I lived.

"I can do nothing about that," she said, "but I do not wish you to come to the house any more, or to see her outside."

Having thus pronounced her judgment, Mathive went off to rejoin her daughter, who watched me sadly from a distance; and I went away quite confounded.

The workman whom she had hired was a young fellow from La Séguinie, who had worked for them as a day laborer, and who had pleased her. He was a strong, coarse fellow, with broad shoulders and a thickset body, and he wished to play the dandy. In addition, he was a brute, incapable of fine feelings, who saw nothing outside of what was under his nose. As soon as he noticed that Mathive looked favorably upon him—and he saw this at once—he began to put on the airs of the master of the house. He was soon prinked out like the village dandy, with good shirts of fine linen, a silk cravat, a gray hat, and a handsome blouse and shoes. He had not been a month at Puy-pautier before he was acquainted with Mathive's sack of golden louis, and had begun to make them dance.

All the neighbors soon knew how matters stood;

acting on the advice of the old woman, however, he pretended to be courting Lina, to conceal his own game, but he was too stupid to hide the truth.

My poor sweetheart was very much distressed, as I was too; especially as she understood all that was going on, although she said nothing. But what could she do? Géral was always in the land of fireside dreams, scarcely able to move, and hardly clear in his mind. He was not the one to set things to rights. Although Lina's mother had forbidden her as she had me, it will surprise no one to hear that we found means to see each other at times. Then she would tell me all her troubles and I would try to console her and get her to have patience, telling her that everything would right itself in time. But, if the truth must be told, that was not what happened. The longer the affair went on, the more that blackguard took control of things in the house, because of Mathive's folly. If at times she did not agree with some idea of his, he would speak at once of going away, and the old simpleton of a woman would give in and let him do as he liked. In short, it was he who "cut the stuffing," as they say of those who become masters.

Although this boy, called Guilhem, was stupid, as I have already said, he understood before long that the old woman could give him many things,—golden louis, filched one by one, with which he could get drunk on Sunday at Bars, on Tuesday at Thenon, and then go on a spree through the chief parishes over there. But as for the property, it all belonged to Géral

and would descend to Lina, for the old man had acknowledged her when he married Mathive. And it was the property that he desired above everything, because he told himself that when G eral died—an event which indeed happened soon afterwards—Lina would be mistress of everything, and then good-bye to the sprees! He would have to leave. So he pretended to be devoted to her, especially before other people, and then told the old woman, who was stung with jealousy, although she had advised him to play this game, which was a deceit to keep the world from gossiping. Mathive was furious at having to endure this, and vented her anger on her daughter, scolding her incessantly, and at times striking her.

After a while, still seeking to accomplish his purpose, Guilhem told Mathive that the only way to stop people's tongues was to marry him to Lina. But the old woman would not go to that length, and protested loudly. By a great effort she could bring herself to endure her blackguard's pretending to court her daughter; but let them marry! That was another matter!

It was in vain for him to assure her that everything would remain after the marriage as it had been before, and that what he proposed was in her own interest, so that no one could speak ill of her. It was all useless. The evil old woman suspected that when he was once married to Lina he would get rid of her; and she refused up and down. Then he was angry, and repulsed her roughly, and the more she did for him, and the more she pampered him in order to ap-

pease him, the more severely he rebuffed her. Poor Lina felt the consequences of all this, for her mother had grown to hate her so much that she even began to beat her. I learned what was going on, partly from Lina, partly from Bertrille, and was so dreadfully distressed to know she was unhappy and worried so much that at times I did not sleep all night. I often thought of teaching this Guilhem a lesson, and my hand itched to give him a drubbing; but Lina begged me to do nothing, and, for fear of making her even more unhappy, I made no move.

One day, however, I could stand it no longer. I came up to him at Thenon, and gave him to understand that he could do as he chose with Mathive and her golden louis—I laughed at them; but as for Lina, I forbade him to have anything to do with her.

"Listen to me," I continued, "if you are unlucky enough to cause her any trouble, or to make love to her, I'll have your hide!"

He was at least as strong as I, but he was a coward; and he swore some great oaths that he had never done anything, either good or bad, for which I could reproach him. All he had done was to keep her mother from plaguing her.

"You can ask Lina herself, I tell you. . . ."

"Well, you have your warning!" I said to him as I went off, disgusted at his cowardice and hypocrisy.

Meanwhile, a great sorrow had come to us at La Granval. One morning, as he was going out of the house to pick up chestnuts, Bonal fell to the earth

in a seizure. I carried him to his bed, and held vinegar to his nostrils while Fantille supported his head; but he died at the end of a few minutes, without having regained consciousness.

As old Jean had happened to arrive at this moment, I begged him, after our first outburst of grief, to return to Maurezies and send one of his neighbors to Fanlac to notify the Chevalier de Galibert. I went off myself to make the declaration to the Mayor, and at the same time to order the casket.

When I came back, Jean had already returned, and we three, including Fantille, remained to watch the dead. Usually the dead are dressed in their best clothes; but we could not do that, for Bonal had no other clothes than those which he wore. At times, Fantille used to say to him:

"You would do well to have some other clothes made for yourself. When you get wet, you will not even have anything to change into."

And he would answer:

"When these are worn out, I'll see about it . . . Perhaps I shall not need any others," he added smiling faintly.

So he lay on the bed, dressed just as he was every day. His face was calm, and, had it not been for its waxlike pallor, one would have said that he was asleep. His features seemed to have become finer, the nostrils, formerly a little too pronounced, had grown thinner; his mouth was gently closed, and the trace of all the sorrow that at times had shadowed his face, had dis-

appeared since he had entered into eternal rest. Fantille had kept some candle-ends for thunderstorms, and had lighted one of them near the bed on a little table covered with a cloth, where there was also a sprig of boxwood saved from Palm Sunday, lying in a plate full of holy water. But except for Jean, no one had come to sprinkle the dead, for we were isolated in the midst of the forest. Then, it must be admitted, people felt for Bonal what cannot be called fear but a sort of aversion, as for an unfrocked curé;—even though he was so quite against his will, poor man!

After a painful afternoon, night, coming early, as it does in autumn, found only the three of us there. The candle-light flickered on the death-bed and lighted us up where we sat close by, leaving in the vast room obscure corners which enveloped us in shadow. Fantille told her beads, and we, Jean and I, reflected sadly, listening mechanically to the grinding sound—the *gre, gre, gre*—of a worm which was boring into a rafter over our heads. Sometimes we exchanged a few words in a low voice that scarcely broke the funereal silence.

About seven o'clock at night, we heard a horse's hoofs in the court, and I went out with Jean; it was the Chevalier. While Jean took the mare to the stable I led him to the death chamber and took his cloak.

"Poor friend!" he said, approaching the bed.

And, leaning over, he piously kissed the cold forehead of the dead man. Rising up, he asked me what had happened, and when I had told him about this

sad occurrence, he sat down on the chair which Fantille brought forward, and we remained all four silent and thoughtful.

It was bad weather; outside a high wind was rushing through the great nut trees, with the noise of a river in flood and filtering under the tiles, where it moaned overhead beneath the garret door, which was poorly fastened and banged in the wind. From time to time a gust drove the rain against the window-panes, and rushed noisily into the great chimney. Then we looked at each other, saying: "What weather!"

So the long night passed. I, who was unaccustomed to it, and could not remain seated for long, would get up and go out into the court to move my legs; and while the wind whipped my face, would watch the passage across the gray sky of great black clouds which fled away into the night.

When dawn appeared through the window-panes, dimming the flame of the wax candle that lighted us, the Chevalier asked me if I had made all the necessary preparations for the burial. I answered that except for notifying the Mayor and ordering the coffin, I had done nothing, as I had wished to await his advice. Then I explained to him that Bonal had often told us he wished to be buried at the end of the avenue under the great chestnut tree which had been planted by his father on the day of his birth, and that it would be very fitting to follow his wishes, especially since, if he were carried to the cemetery,

the curé, out of hate, would have him placed in that melancholy corner, full of thistles and briars, which was reserved for those who destroy themselves.

The Chevalier thought a moment, and then said:

“Let it be done according to the wishes of our poor dead friend. I know the Mayor; he is not the man to disturb himself over a slight infringement of the law, of which he may even be ignorant. Besides, should there be any difficulty later, I will try to arrange it.”

When I heard this, I went out, and, taking a pickax and spade, I went off down the avenue. The rain had stopped; the morning was cool, and in the little valley below La Granval, there floated above the fields, full of pale pools of water, a light mist rising from the spring. Towards the east, the sky was turning red, and the moist morning wind sent the wet leaves and empty chestnut burrs tumbling heavily to the ground. I reached the foot of the great chestnut tree, and began sadly to dig the grave, thinking that this was the last service I could render the dead man to whom I owed so much.

About ten o'clock, when I had finished, I came back to the house and, just as I was opening the gate of the court, I saw Mlle. Hermine arriving, riding on her donkey, which was being driven by Cariol. As she came into the chamber of the dead, she took the branch of boxwood and sprinkled holy water over the body; then she knelt by the bedside and prayed

for a long time, her head bent. When she arose, she wiped her eyes and said, looking at the dead man:

"Now all his sorrows are over."

About noon, Fantille, who had put a chicken in the pot, made Mlle. Hermine take a little bouillon, for she would have nothing else; but the Chevalier ate a little soup and drank a glass of wine.

About two o'clock, the justice of the peace came with his recorder to affix the seals. He let us take some sheets from the linen cupboard to enshroud the dead, and then closed everything, the cabinets, drawers and cupboards. When he had finished, he talked for a moment with the Chevalier, while he walked about the house, and then he went home.

Since the carpenter did not arrive, I went out to meet him. Before long I saw him in the distance, walking behind his pack-mule, which carried the coffin fastened across its back, while he himself held on lazily to the crupper. When I reached the house, I put the casket down in the room, and, going into the alcove where the bed was, with the Chevalier on the other side, we slipped a sheet under the body, starting at the head. After that, all four of us, including Cariol and Jean, lifted the curé from the bed, and laid him in the coffin, where Mlle. Hermine had placed a pillow. Then, when we had said our last farewells to the poor ex-curé Bonal, the shroud was folded back over him, the carpenter adjusted the cover and began to nail it. In that room where until now we

had only spoken in a low voice, as if we feared to awaken the dead, these loud blows of the hammer had a brutal sound very painful to hear.

The day, however, was drawing to a close. Having put the casket on two chairs, we passed some twisted towels under it, and went out of the house. There was not a single stranger present, no one except two old beggar women of the neighborhood to whom Bonal used to carry from time to time a loaf of bread or a piece of lard for their soup.

While we men, carrying the coffin, walked down the avenue with a heavy, measured tread, these old women, their rosaries in their hands, followed Mlle. Hermine and Fantille, who carried the holy water. A cold east wind ruffled the sheet which covered the coffin, and stirred our hair. Dead leaves, loosened from the chestnut trees, fell on the white cloth like a token of mourning from the inanimate world. Noisy magpies flew overhead, struggling against the wind to reach their night's perch. Far off you could hear the horn of a shepherd calling his sheep, or the bellowing of an ox returning from the watering-place. The sun, about to sink below the horizon, was hidden by black bars of cloud; and a sort of gray vapor was descending on the earth at the approach of evening. As we neared the end of the avenue, the wind brought us the far-off sound of the bells of Saint-Geyrac, ringing the Ave Maria. It seemed as if the voice of the Church, rising above the miseries of this world, was blessing the poor priest who had been a victim of his

brethren's hatred. When we reached the side of the grave, the coffin was placed on the edge of the excavation, and we waited.

Then M. de Galibert took a book from his sister's hands, and, standing by the grave, repeated the *De Profundis* and the prayers for the dead, and we all, as he wished, addressed our last thought to the good and honest man Bonal had been. When the prayers were over, we lowered the coffin into the grave, and the Chevalier, having said a last farewell to the dead man, took the branch of boxwood, sprinkled the few drops of holy water over him, and then flung in a handful of earth. We others did likewise, and while the earth fell with a heavy noise on the casket, Mlle. Hermine knelt and prayed fervently.

After I had filled in the grave with the help of Cariol, we all went back to the house. Then the Chevalier and his sister returned to Fanlac, preceded by Cariol carrying a lantern. The two old women received the customary alms, and set off for their cabins, Jean returned home, and we remained alone, Fantille and I. The next morning I went to cut sod for Bonal's grave, and, while Fantille was making a cross of boxwood to place over it, I went back to my work; for even though death enters a house, the survivors must still take up the daily round of living.

When the justice of the peace came to remove the seals, he was accompanied by a certain fellow, half peasant, half gentleman, who, the recorder said, was

a third cousin of Bonal. This man looked at me with disfavor, and his wife did also, for they had heard that their cousin had left me all his property. I myself knew nothing about it, and had not even thought of it; but the Chevalier, who knew the dead man's intentions, had said a word or two about it to the justice when the seals were placed, and it is difficult to keep such things entirely secret. When the linen cupboard was opened, in a drawer in the middle, the key of which was found between two sheets, the justice discovered a paper that turned out to be the will. When he had opened it, he read:

"I give and bequeath to Jacques Ferral, called Jacquou, all my property, both real and personal, without exception, on condition that he shall keep, nourish and support in his home, as his own mother, my servant Fantille, as long as she shall live.' "

" 'Bonal,

" 'Former curé of Fanlac.' "

The cousin gave a spiteful exclamation, and his wife, who had already approached the cupboard to see if there was not some money in it, flung me a furious look, as if she were going to scratch my face.

"Unfortunately for Jacquou," added the justice, "the will is not valid, for it is not dated."

"You see, my boy," he added, showing me the paper. "We will go on looking," he continued, "perhaps we shall find another."

But, to the great delight of the cousin and his wife, they found nothing more. As soon as the search

was ended, they closed all the cabinets and wardrobes, and went all over the house to take stock of their inheritance. They climbed up to the loft to see if there were much wheat there; went down into the cellar where there was only one cask of wine, already tapped; went out to the barn to estimate the value of the cattle and everything there; rejoicing at the good windfall that had come to them, ~~for~~ Bonal had no other relatives.

"For all that," said the woman, "I thought that in the house of a former curé there would be more linen in the cupboards."

"And," added the man, "I thought there would be more wine in the cellar, and some of it unopened."

While this was going on, I said to Fantille:

"My poor woman, there is nothing more for us to do here except pack up our bundles."

And I began to collect my things, as did Fantille; for I did not wish to remain an hour longer with these people, whose cupidity revolted me. But as we were about to leave, the woman said to us:

"And what are you carrying off in your bundles?"

"Nothing that belongs to you, good woman! Do not fear!"

When we had left the house, I asked Fantille:

"Where are you planning to go now?"

"Where can I go except to M. le Chevalier's? They will keep me until I have found another place," she added sadly.

Poor Fantille! She was nearing sixty, and was no

longer very active, and now she had to hire herself out to strangers, just as she was reaching the age when she needed a little rest.

"I will go with you," I told her, "but first we will go to Jean's house, and I will leave my bundle there."

When we reached Maurezies, I told Jean the story of the will, and he said:

"Bonal was so honest himself that he thought it sufficient to make his wishes known. He was well informed in many matters, but he did not know of that law, poor soul! What can you expect? He had the desire to do good to you, and you are under the same obligation to him as if he had succeeded."

"That's what I feel, Jean; I assure you that I will always remember him with the same gratitude as if his will had been carried out."

"I don't know what you mean to do now," Jean went on, "but you can always stay here; you'll have bread, and you'll not sleep out of doors."

"Thanks, Jean," I said; "I'll be very glad to stay for a while; but first I must accompany Fantille as far as Fanlac."

And, putting down my little bundle, I took that of the old woman, who was sitting on the bench, her hands crossed on her knees, her head bent. She got up and went off towards Fanlac, I carrying the old gun that Bonal had given me slung over my shoulder.

As we walked, I thought to myself that perhaps the Chevalier and his sister would wish to keep me, out of sheer goodness; for their property was not large

enough to require another workman on the place besides Cariol. But I was too proud to be willing to be dependent on them, knowing that their hearts were larger than their purses; and for that matter, feeling myself quite capable of earning my own living. Besides, I could not bring myself to the thought of going so far away from Lina, for I wished to be near enough to help her, in case her mother made her too unhappy.

So when, after walking a long time, we reached La Blaugie, I said to Fantille:

"Now you're almost there; I'm going to turn back, so as not to get caught by the dark."

"So you're not coming to Fanlac, to tell M. le Chevalier what has happened?"

"My poor Fantille, you'll tell him quite well yourself. I'll not go to-day. See, the sun is already sinking. . . . So, good-bye! I'll come again in a few days."

And I left her and went back to Maurezies.

Compared with Jean's dwelling, which had only one room and was lighted by a tiny window, the house at La Granval was a large, fine bourgeois house. The only floor was the beaten earth, with holes in some spots, and hummocks in others where mud from outside had been brought in and left by the sabots. In the corner was a poor bed; in the center an old table and a bench; against the crumbling wall a poor, miserable chest, riddled by worms; under the table a kettle for chestnuts and a pot; in the sinkstone a wooden

bucket; and that was all. The low, broad chimney smoked in all the winds, for the planks and rafters of the loft were a glistening black; it seemed to me that I had come back to Combenègre.

It was already late when I arrived. By the fire-light I saw Jean sitting in the corner of the hearth, stirring the coals under the pot which hung from the hook.

"I've made a little soup," he said to me, "it must be done. Come and taste it, while I cut the bread."

He got up, opened the large drawer of the table, and took out the loaf. Then he began to cut the bread into the soup-dish of brown earthenware that had been mended in several places.

"You see," he said to me, pointing to the loaf, which was hollowed out in the middle, and had two horns like a new moon, "I've bad teeth and can only eat the crumbs. You will have to eat the crusts."

I was very hungry, having scarcely eaten for two days, so distressed had I been at the death of my poor Bonal. But when we are young it is vain for us to be unhappy; our stomachs soon reclaim our attention. So I gulped down two big plates of soup, but there was no way of making the piquette which means so much to peasants. Jean had no good wine, nor even poor, sour wine. When I had finished my soup, I cut a big piece of bread, and rubbed some garlic on it, using the salt sparingly, for it was dear in those days. Then I drank a small cup of water, and it was time to go to bed.

Jean's bed was a miserable affair, for it had only a mattress stuffed with corn husks and birch leaves, to save pains and aches; and over it a feather-quilt. But it was very large, almost square, like those ancient beds in which they used to sleep four at a time; and I slept there like a dormouse in winter.

The next day I went prowling about Puypautier, in the hope of seeing Lina,—watching from a distance for the moment when she would take her animals out to the field. When I saw her come out of the court, driving her sheep and her goat before her, and turning towards the broad valley below the village, I went to hide in a neighboring wood, along which there was a bank covered with bushes, wild plums and grapes, where she came for shelter from the wind. From my hiding-place I saw her turning her spindle, lifting her eyes from time to time to make sure that none of her sheep were wandering. Sometimes she stopped spinning, and dropped the hand which held the distaff. She seemed to be reflecting sadly. Her dog was seated at her feet, watching the flock; and a few steps from her her goat was rearing up against a great pile of stones, or *cheyrou*, covered with blackberry vines, and was browsing busily, wagging his brown beard. It was a deserted spot of poor, barren land, tufted with that plant called dog's-skin, with abandoned grapevines, a few shoots of a fig-tree coming out of the earth from old roots, and all about, clumps of oak trees, with their dead, tan-colored leaves. Against the gray of the fields, where a fine

dry grass grew up among the lavenders, and under this somber autumn sky over which the clouds hurried, driven by the wind, the figure of my dear Lina looked very pretty in her simple clothes. She wore a short skirt of drugget which fell in big stiff folds, a bodice of flowered calico which showed her slim waist and young bosom, an apron of red cotton cloth, and on her head a blue checked kerchief which seemed too small to hold in her light brown hair, for it slipped out, teased by the wind, over her neck and forehead.

I stayed there a moment motionless, watching her; then I caught her attention by low whistles which brought her dog yapping to my side. Revealing myself, I signaled to her to come to a spot where no one could see us; and when she was there and I had quieted the dog, I gave her a long embrace, pressing her to me as if I were afraid of losing her. She leaned her head sorrowfully against my breast, and seemed to put herself under my protection.

Alas, the death of Bonal had not put me in any position to protect her. She listened to the tale of all that had happened, and sighed heavily.

"The holy Virgin knows that I love you as much poor as rich! I'm sorry, however, that it should have turned out like this. If the will of the dead curé had been good for anything, it might have helped along our marriage; the chances now do not seem very good; far from it!"

Then she told me about all the misery her mother caused her, and about what was even harder to bear,

—the advances of Guilhem, who took her side against that old hag. All this without speaking of her shame over what went on before her very eyes, for these wretches scarcely took the trouble to hide what they did, Mathive even less than her blackguard!

“Listen,” I told her, “if it reaches a point where you’re no longer able to endure your troubles, and if we cannot meet each other, send me word by Bertrille. I’ll go to Bars every Sunday for this purpose. In one way or another we’ll try to make things better. Jean is a man of good judgment, and then I’ll go to find M. le Chevalier and the justice. There must be laws to prevent things like that. So take courage, my Linette!”

And we were silent a moment, clinging closely to each other, so that I felt the dear little heart of my darling beating in her breast like that of a young bird surprised in the nest. Finally, after we had repeated over and over, twenty times, that we would love each other until death, whatever happened, I kissed for a last time her beautiful wet eyes, and went off across the woods so as not to be seen.

Things went on like this for some time; Lina always harrassed but still patient, I always dreadfully disturbed at knowing she was unhappy. In spite of it, I tried to earn my living so as not to be a burden on poor Jean; but it was hardly the moment for finding work. Seeing that Jean had several plots of ground around Maurezies, which were lying fallow

because he was too old to cultivate them, I took charge of them; and since I had no oxen I dug the fields by hand, and sowed them, though it was rather hard work. Then winter came, with bad weather, and work out of doors stopped entirely. Now I taxed my ingenuity to find ways of bringing a few sous into the house. Having one day met at a fair in Rouffignac a man who had undertaken to supply black alder wood, the charcoal of which is used to manufacture powder, I began to cut some for his business. But the skinflint did not give me much for it, and I had to scratch myself in the thickets and cut many bundles of fagots to earn an écu of a hundred sous. My principal resource, therefore, was hunting.

In snowy weather, in the late evening, my lantern under my blouse and my flat stick under my arm, I would go out to hunt birds by lantern light, as my dead father used to do. During the daytime I would kill several partridges, decoying them with a bird call, or else on some bright moonlight night I would go to watch for hares at likely spots in the forest. Sometimes, I passed entire hours without seeing anything, seated on the edge of a ditch at a crossroads, with gun hidden, and shivering in Jean's miserable cloak, all torn and full of holes. At times, I was more fortunate. In the path I would see a buck hare, with its nose to the ground, seeking for the trail of a doe hare; and my shot, deadened by the night fogs, would make him leap into the air. By all these means, I brought back to the house from time to time a few

twenty or thirty-sou pieces, or something else that we needed. There were plenty of wolves in the forest, but we almost never saw them at night, for they went prowling around the villages to catch some dog, forgotten and left out of doors, or to force open the door of some sheep stable that was insecurely closed. It would have been a good piece of business, however, to kill one of them, on account of the reward.

One winter morning at dawn, I was coming back from the hunt with a hare that I had just killed still warm in my haversack; I was trying to think in what way I could win the fifteen francs offered by the Government, when I noticed the tracks of a big wolf, the forefeet of which were deeply marked in the wet earth. "That one," I thought, "was well loaded down!" And indeed when I followed the trail of the beast, I could see in places the marks where an animal's feet had scraped the path. Although a wolf can easily fling a sheep over its shoulder and gallop off with it in its jaws, its prey sometimes slips and drags on the ground. During the day I came back to look for the animal's tracks, and discovered where it had entered a great thicket of brambles, bushes, and gorse, where the devil himself could not have penetrated. When I had carefully observed the wolf's track several times, I saw that he had certain fixed habits, and that on leaving the crossroads of L'Homme Mort he always came back to his den by the same path. This crossroads had an evil reputation in the countryside for being haunted by the devil, and everyone had his own

tale to tell about it. It had got its name because long ago a man had been found dead there, who, when he was carefully examined by the principal surgeon at Thenon, bore no mark of any wound. From this circumstance, people had concluded that he had come there to make a pact with the devil, and that he had died of fear on seeing him appear, all black, with horns on his forehead—that went without saying—cloven feet and eyes shining like coals. Besides, it was just the sort of spot about which such tales are apt to be invented, for it was a lonely place deep in the woods, in the midst of dense thickets, traversed by the charcoal-burners' paths, paths more or less frequented according to the season, which crossed each other just in this hollow.

Unlike most of the people of the countryside, I was not superstitious, and I laughed at the Devil and the Adversary. I have even picked up at this cross-roads a double-liard, left there by some fever patient; and I had no fear of catching the fever, as the poor simpleton who carried it there believed would happen. When, as I started out hunting, I met old Guillemette of Granges begging her bread,—she who was supposed to have the evil eye,—it did not drive me back to the house, as it did others. I did not care, either, if I saw birds of ill-omen, buzzards, magpies, or crows; whether they were on my right or my left made no difference to me. The dead Curé Bonal had early freed me from all these stupidities, this belief in werewolves, in the winged huntress, in hobgoblins, in

ghosts, which in the heart of our countryside is handed down from grandmother to grandchildren in the long evenings, and makes the young boys and girls shiver, where they cower in the chimney-corner.

What concerned me was the capture of the wolf. To accomplish this, I made a hiding-place at the edge of the thicket quite near the crossroads; and about midnight I went out to await the beast's return to his stronghold. But I was stupid enough to come by the road he usually followed, so that when he got wind of me, half a gunshot away, he dashed off into the underbrush, and I did not see him.

"Dirty beast," I thought, as I went home that morning. "You have taught me a lesson. I shall do as you do."

So a few days later, having made a wide detour, I entered the underbrush and covertly reached my hiding-place. I remained there fully four hours, motionless, listening to far-off noises. There would be the gunshot of some poor devil like myself lying in wait; the gallop of a herd of wild boars through the underbrush; the howling of a she-wolf calling the male; the barking of the guard's dogs when they scented the wild animals in the wind; the "clou, clou" of a screech-owl perched nearby, the almost inaudible sound—transmitted by the earth—of a cart jolting heavily along on an abandoned road, in the course of one of those nocturnal jaunts that peasants love; or else those inexplicable noises that pass in the night. At times, there were vague sounds about me, the beating of the

wings of a bird that a wildcat had surprised, the passage of a badger through the underbrush, or the underground burrowing of some unknown little creature.

In spite of all my patience, I was beginning to despair, when all at once I saw coming down the path a great animal with eyes that shone like candles. The wolf was walking slowly, like a well-sated animal which had spent its night profitably. As he came near, I saw him better. He was an old wolf, truly superb in his rough, thick pelt, his robust shoulders and enormous head, with his raised ears and pointed nose. I had pointed the barrel of my gun directly at him, my finger on the trigger; and when he was ten paces away, I fired straight at his chest. He leaped up, gave a hoarse yelp like a sob stifled in blood, and fell stone dead. When I had tied his four feet together, I threw my prey over my shoulder, and went back to the house, where I arrived drenched in sweat, although it was not warm. As I placed the animal on the ground, Jean cried out:

“That was a pretty shot!”

As I was impatient to bring him the money that very morning, and since a neighbor had lent me his ass, I fastened the wolf to the pack-saddle and set off for Périgueux. I went over the same road that I had taken long before with my mother, but as I walked faster now, I reached there about five o'clock. But as I had to wait till next day to present my wolf, I took lodgings in a little inn near the Pont-Vieux.

I had hardly stopped, when all the people in the neighborhood came flocking to see the beast, such idlers are the city people. They plied me with questions, asking where and how I had killed it, and discussing among themselves the nature and habits of wolves. There were even some knaves who insisted that a wolf's ribs ran lengthwise. Those who were foolish enough to believe it were much astonished when they felt this one through his thick pelt, to find that his ribs were like those of any other animal. Then those other clever fellows cried out:

"It is quite true, however; I have always heard that a wolf's ribs run lengthwise. Perhaps this is only a large dog."

It made me shrug my shoulders to see the city folk so silly. But I said nothing to them. What was the use?

The next day, followed by all the children of the rue Neuve, along which I passed, I carried my wolf to the prefecture. The porter let me into the court and went to find someone. Several men came instead of one, and like the people about the inn, they asked me a hundred questions about the spot where I had killed the beast, how I had set about it, and whether I had not been afraid to go out and lie in wait at night like that, and other questions of this sort. The wolf was stretched out on the ground in the midst of a circle of employees, young and old, who had left their desks, some of them with pens still behind their ears or with their coat-sleeves turned

back; one, who must have been the chief, was wrapped up like an onion in four or five garments, one above the other. The ass waited patiently, its ears drooping; and I did the same, although I was impatient to return. Finally, when they had chattered enough, one of the gentlemen took me away, and after he had made me wait a good quarter of an hour and had taken me about to other bureaus, he gave me a paper, telling me to go to the paymaster to receive the bounty money.

When I was at the paymaster's desk, the cashier said to me in patois:

"You cannot sign your name, can you?"

"Indeed, yes," I told him, "I can sign my name."

He looked at me in astonishment, passed me a pen, and when I had signed my name, he gave me fifteen francs.

At the door, I took the ass again, and went off to M. Fongrave's house to take him a hare which I had in my haversack. But in his old house on the rue de la Sagesse, they told me he had not lived there for a long time. I went off, still leading the ass, and by dint of much searching, I managed to discover the dwelling of my dead father's lawyer. As he was not in, I gave the hare to the servant, begging her to tell her master that the son of the late Martin Ferral had sent it to him.

When that was done, I went to buy a silver ring for my Lina, which cost me all of three francs and ten sous. Then I came back to the inn, where the ass ate some cabbage-leaves, and I had some soup with

a good drink after it. After that, I set out with the beast for Maurezies, where I arrived fairly late, about eleven o'clock at night.

The next Sunday I gave the ring I had brought to Bertrille, to hand it to Lina, which she did at once; and I returned home happy; as if this ring had the power to settle our affairs favorably. So small a thing does it take to change our desires into hopes.

CHAPTER VII

THE days passed, however; winter was drawing to its close; and there began to blossom in the woods those Candlemas violets that some call snowdrops. With the fine weather I was able to earn a few sous, going out here and there by the day to sow the oats or barley, dig about the vines, or do other seasonable work. As I heard nothing more of the Comte de Nansac, I relaxed my precautions somewhat as I went to work or returned from it.

I did not count on his having forgotten me, and even less on his having forgiven me, but as it was a long time since our encounter, I thought that if he had wished to strike me or have me injured by an unexpected blow, he could easily have found an opportunity. Therefore I concluded that he did not wish to avenge himself in this way. When we spoke of it, however, Jean always said:

“Be on your guard against that man; he is capable of anything. Perhaps he is pretending to have forgotten you; in that case it is in order to entrap you all the better. If you have never been shot at, going about the forest, it is because he is reserving something worse for you. He is shrewd and cunning, that cur, and the proof is that he got off with a whole skin those times when he carried off the money col-

lected by the poll-tax in the Barade forest, whereas the others lost their heads because of it.

I had heard people mention these occurrences in the Barade forest, and others of the same sort, to the dead Curé Bonal and the Chevalier. Some nobles and rich bourgeois of the countryside had undertaken to make war on the Republic, after the manner of the Chouans, and had found no better way than to cut off its supplies by stealing the sums of money that were sent from the under-prefectures to Périgueux.

Attacks had been made at several places in the department, but in the Barade forest there had been three.

In all these affairs the Comte de Nansac had been mixed up, and had even been the leader of one of the bands working in the forest. In 1799 a band of twenty-five or thirty men, well-armed and masked with hare-skins, attacked the convoy of revenue from Sarlat, which was escorted by three gendarmes, not far from the guard's barracks at Lac-Gendre, and carried off about 15,000 francs.

In connection with this, the Chevalier de Galibert used to say that one of these brigands with whom he was acquainted had tried to enlist him; he had refused, saying that it was robbery all the same whether you robbed the Government or a private person.

Two years after this attack, a convoy that carried 7,000 francs was robbed under the same circumstances. Without mentioning the other robberies of monies collected from Nontron and Bergerac, one can see that

these men did a good business. To be sure, they risked their heads, but at this period the gendarmerie was so badly organized that it was never able to catch them.

Under the Empire it was a different story.

The most famous attack, in which there were several wounded and one killed, took place in 1811, at a spot called since then "The Three Brothers," because three fine chestnut trees had grown there upon one stump. This time the convoy carried some forty-odd thousand francs locked up in four strong boxes, on two pack-horses. There were not many robbers, only five or six; so that if their stroke had succeeded it would have been lucky for them. Unfortunately for them it turned out badly, for after they had captured the convoy and tied the agent in charge and the escort to trees, the robbers were able to carry off only one chest, and that not very far. For the alarm was given by a man who had escaped, and the national guards of Rouffignac and Saint-Cernin, called together by the tocsin, set out in pursuit and captured four of the robbers after a volley of shots in which a national guard was killed instantly and two others were seriously wounded.

One of the brigands, seeing that the fight was going badly, ran away, and escaped abroad, whence he did not return until after the downfall of Napoleon.

As for the four robbers who were captured, they suffered for the whole band, and six weeks later were guillotined on the Place de la Clautre at Périgueux.

"I'd wager burning my hand off that the Comte de Nansac was a member of that band," said Jean. "But, clever fellow that he was, when from his hiding-place he saw the convoy coming, seven or eight strong, he realized that it would be no easy matter to attack it, and he withdrew before the attack, so that no one was able to say he had seen him with the others. In the affair of 1801 he was there and even directed it. From a thicket where I was lying, I recognized him among the band when, after the robbery, they were going along a path to Peyre-Male, where they doubtless divided the stolen money."

"And yet, Jean," I said, "people complain of our times, in spite of the fact that there are no bands of armed brigands any longer."

"That is true. The cutting off of those four heads somewhat chilled the others. But if they no longer rob in bands, there are always some who work alone or in couples on the highways over there. And there are a devil of a lot more beggars and thieves; I don't know if it is much of an improvement. As for you," he continued, "I repeat, be on your guard against the Count. He would kill anyone without turning a hair; just think of what he is capable of doing to you!"

At times when I thought of all this, I felt confirmed in my belief that the Comte de Nansac would not stop at any crime if he could commit it with impunity. "Perhaps," I thought, "he needs some confederate to help him, and is waiting for his son. In short, I must keep my eyes open, and not grow careless about him."

Besides, the Count's ordinary behavior showed the sort of man he was. There was nobody in the neighborhood of l'Herm who did not suffer from him and his set. For amusement this wretch would ride with his men through the fields of ripening wheat, go into the vineyards with his dogs, which ate the ripe grapes, and have his hounds kill a shepherd's dog or a sheep, when he had come back empty-handed from the hunt. You had to step aside quickly out of his road, and bow very low to him, or you were likely to get a good crack with the whip. If he met a peasant in his woods, he would have him knocked about by his men. One day he even sent a shot between the legs of a man from Prisse, whom he suspected of poaching on his land. The head huntsman and the guards all took their cue from him, and behaved like him, as did his numerous guests at l'Herm, where they lived riotously. Even his daughters did likewise, and thought nothing, as they galloped by, of horsewhipping a poor devil who was too slow in getting out of the way. The eldest had never come back, and there remained four daughters, big Amazons, bold and handsome, who always had the young nobles of the countryside about their skirts, dangling after them and amusing themselves with them. By day there would be rides, visits to the neighboring châteaux, and hunting parties where the young people amused themselves in the woods to suit themselves. In the evening, when the hounds had been called off, there would be splendid

feasts in the great hall, where huge logs blazed on the great iron fire-dogs.

On rainy days, there would be a little respite for the remoter villages, for the young people would stay at the château, dancing, singing, playing-hide-and-seek in the rooms and attics where there were little recesses in which they could conceal themselves in couples. But at times, tired of these amusements, they would go to the house of one of their farmers or of one of their neighbors in the village who dared not refuse, and have pancakes made. The young Nansac ladies would scream with laughter if some of the young men who escorted them annoyed the peasant girls. And if a girl defended herself, or if the parents grew angry—for they sometimes went pretty far—these mischievous fools would say that it was all a great honor for the girls. In short, they did not hesitate to copy the Count in everything, and like him to be insolent and brutal with the “paysantaille,” as they called them. This grandson of a water-carrier so heartily despised the poor people of the neighborhood that if he was caught in a storm while out hunting, he and his friends would come into the houses leading their horses, which they would fasten to the foot of the beds. If it displeased him to see people go along a public road as they had always done, he appropriated it offhand by means of a ditch at each end. He had seized the ancient commons pasture-land of the village of l’Herm, and no one dared to protest, because where he

was concerned there was no justice obtainable. In this lonely countryside, therefore, thanks to the weakness and complicity of those in authority who feared his power and wickedness, the Count renewed, as far as he could, the cruel tyranny of the old lords of the *ancien régime*. So, in the whole countryside there existed, against him especially, but also against his entire family, a sullen hatred, which grew steadily stronger and more bitter,—a hatred that was restrained by fear of these wicked men and by the impossibility of obtaining justice by legal means. The villagers of l'Herm and Prisse were the most hostile to the Count and his family, since they were most exposed to his molestations and insolence.

Some will perhaps say: "How can it be that the Count and his family, who were so pious, were also so wicked?"

Ah! that's just it! They were like so many other coarse-grained Catholics, for whom religion is a matter of fashion, habit or personal interest, and who, when they have fulfilled the external practices of devotion, do not hesitate to give free expression to their unbridled passions, and to abandon themselves to all their vices.

The Count was arrogant, unjust, wicked, capable of anything, and his daughters were foolish, insolent and licentious. Not one of them had ever done any good to anyone about them, but, on the contrary, a great deal of harm. For all that, they had a chaplain in

their service, and never went without mass, and took communion at all the special festivals.

Besides, all this was not peculiar to them. Since the fall of the Empire and the return of him whom they called "our father from Ghent," religion had become a party question for the nobility. The gentlemen, philosophers before the Revolution, now affected religious sentiments, in order to separate themselves the better from the common people who had become Jacobins or lukewarm believers, as formerly they had become unbelievers in order to distinguish themselves from a populace that was still stuck fast in superstition. There were a few of them who had, however, persisted in their irreligion, like the old Marquis, who on his deathbed had firmly refused the good offices of Dom Enjalbert. But these were rare. On the other hand, there were, among the nobles, sincere Catholics, like the deceased Comtesse de Nansac. But these also were rare.

To-day we see the rich bourgeois particularly, and others as well, following the nobles and imitating them. But they are less zealous than formerly, and do things less successfully. There are many of them who pretend to be good Catholics, whose entire religion consists in asking affectedly for salt codfish on Friday in the hotels when they are away from home, and who would be as embarrassed as the devil if they were asked to point out the curé who polished up their consciences.

But at the time of which I speak I did not think of such things. All these tales of Jean's did disturb me a little at moments, as well as what I myself knew of the Comte de Nansac. But what could I do? Be on the watch! So I was. But it is little use to be on one's guard when he who lies in wait has the advantage. Sometimes at night I would meet in the forest single men or little groups of two or three, hurrying along, with their caps pulled down over their eyes, and a big stick in their hands, who dived into the thickets when they heard anyone. At times they carried full sacks, at others they held their bulging haversacks under their blouses, like men going to market. I knew these fellows well. They were robbers who lived in the old isolated huts on the edges of the forest or in the abandoned cabins of charcoal-burners in the heart of the woods. One could greet all of them after the fashion of Saint-Amand-de-Coly: "Good evening, honest folk, if honest you are!" From time to time we would hear of some theft at a lonely house, or of travelers who were plundered on the highways as they returned from fairs in the neighborhood. I was not astonished, for I knew that, as the saying had it, the Barade was never without wolves or robbers. But since I had been at Maurezies with Jean, I had been careful to see if I were being spied on. One night as I went out to hunt hares, I saw far off in the moonlight two men who plunged into a thicket when they heard me coming.

"The largest is the Comte de Nansac," I said to

myself, "as for the other, if his son has come back from Paris, it must be he."

And this encounter made me even more suspicious. I did not go out at night without having my loaded gun under my arm, ready to shoot, looking to right and left through the woods, and avoiding the paths that were too thickly wooded, at least as much as I could. But it is useless to be on one's guard; those who can choose the moment have the advantage, and when one has to do with scoundrels, some unlucky chance is sure to happen.

In the forest above La Granval, there was a *tuquet*, otherwise called a ridge, where three paths intersected. In the center was a great, ancient oak which five men with arms outstretched could scarcely have encircled, and which was called *lou Jarry de las Fadas*, or the "fairies' oak." This tree was perhaps thousands of years old; without doubt, one which our ancestors, the Gauls, revered, and from which they used to cut the mistletoe with their golden pruning-bills. According to the popular belief, this place was haunted by spirits. Sometimes Nehalenia, the lady with the silver slippers, would come down in a flowing white robe, accompanied by her two black dogs, and, gliding mysteriously over the shivering leaves of the tree-tops, would come to rest at the foot of the giant oak. At other times by starlight, strange monsters of some sort in women's shapes, with great wings of bats, would fly there from the four corners of the horizon, coming to perch in its immense foliage, and in the middle of the dark

night they would spy upon the poachers who were crouched at its foot. Bad luck then to him who was hated by a woman! While he was there, almost invisible against the rough trunk, and while the oak leaves rustled to put him to sleep, these evil creatures, seizing their opportunity, would pounce upon him, tear open his breast, like birds of prey, devour his heart, and then let him go, to live ever after a factitious life.

As I have already said, these old wives' tales did not frighten me, and I often went to this spot because it was good for all sorts of game,—wolves, wild boars, foxes, badgers, hares, all climbed up there, to go the devil knows where farther on. And then, because of the evil reputation of the spot, no one ever came there to hunt; so the place was always free.

One night, while I was there, sitting on a root that came out of the earth like the back of some monstrous serpent, and leaning against the tree, with the firepan of my gun sheltered under my jacket, I began to dream. There was a damp mist which the moon, then in its first quarter, could not quite pierce through. She lighted up the earth, however, through the curtain of fog, sufficiently for eyes as good as mine were then. Drops of dew were falling from the branches about me, like tears. No sound came from the forest, which was sunk in darkness, save from far away, in the direction of Roussie, the mournful howling of a dog that seemed to be foretelling some death. I was sad, that night, thinking of my dear Lina, so unhappy in her home through the fault of

her hussy of a mother and of that evil Guilhem. Since I had spoken to that good-for-nothing wretch, he had said nothing to bother her, but she felt the consequences of his behavior towards Mathive, and, as he usually treated the old woman very harshly, the poor child was not very happy. I had seen her the Sunday before, and she had wept as she told me her miseries and the troubles she had to endure. This memory put mad thoughts into my head, such as the idea of beating that wretch to death, or of fleeing far away, both of us together, Lina and I; but the fear of making her situation worse restrained me.

When I thought of the future, it seemed to me full of cruel uncertainties and a disheartening darkness; and then thinking of the past and remembering the fatality that seemed to pursue our poor family, I recalled all my misfortunes, the death of my father in the galleys, and that of my poor mother, for whom my heart still bled. And going even further into the past, I thought of my grandfather, thrown into a dungeon for rebellion against the Seigneur de Reignac and for burning the château, and set free, just as he was expecting death, by the thunderbolt of the Revolution. And still recalling the past, I remembered that ancestor who had given us the nickname of *croquant*, and who was hanged in the forest of Drouilhe by the nobles of black Périgord, who relentlessly persecuted the poor folk that had revolted against them from excess of misery. Then, full of rancor, mingling in my own mind the misfortunes of my time with those

of the peasants of former days, from the *Bagaudes* up to the *Tard-avisés*, of which last the Curé Bonal had told us, I glimpsed, down the ages, the sad condition of the common people of France, always despised, always downtrodden, tyrannized over and often murdered by their pitiless masters. Comparing my lot with that of my ancestors, poor bare-footed men, miserable clod-breakers, driven to insurrection by hunger and despair, I found it to be very much the same as theirs. Was it possible that more than thirty years after the Revolution one could still be subjected to such odious vexations as those of the Comte de Nansac, who was reviving the crimes of the worst of the rural gentry of former days? Hatred for this pretended nobleman blazed up in my heart, and I told myself that the man who should rid the country of him would be doing a good deed. The spirit of revolt which had caused the death of the former Ferral the Croquant, which had brought my grandfather to the foot of the gallows, and caused my father to die in the galleys,—this spirit which had been quieted for so long by the exhortations of the dead curé and the goodness of saintly Mlle. Hermine, now boiled in my veins. I despised the counsels of prudence of the degenerate poet who made this refrain, preserved by tradition in that portion of Périgord which adjoins Quercy:

Take care, proud Petrocorieu!
Consider before you seize your arms!
For if you are beaten,
Cæsar will cut off your hands!

Ah, if I had not had Lina behind me, how gladly should I have risked not only my hands but my head also, to avenge myself on the Count!

While these ideas were rushing tumultuously through my head, I heard on my right the faint, regular yelping of a fox, following a hare. I loaded my gun and waited. In a quarter of an hour I saw the hare coming slowly along. When it reached the crossroads, it stopped four paces from me and sat up, its ears pointed, listening for a moment to the fox that was chasing it. Seeing that it had time, it slipped down a path, followed it for fifty paces, then bounded under the thicket, came back to the crossroads, took another path, and, after having repeated this maneuver for a third time and thoroughly confused its tracks, it ran off down the path by which it had come, flung itself with enormous leaps into the underbrush and disappeared.

I had enjoyed watching it. "Go on, poor animal," I thought, "save yourself this time; but as for that impudent beast that is chasing you,—let him beware!"

Soon I saw the fox arrive, his nose to the ground, his tail dragging, so tightly glued to the hare's trail that he forgot his usual caution. When he was twenty paces away, I made him leap into the air, and, having put him in my haversack, I went away.

It was about two o'clock in the morning; the moon had gone down, the mist had thickened so that it was very dark. To find one's way in this damp obscurity, one would have had to know the passages and paths as well as I did. I walked along, my gun under my

arm, glancing to right and left, more from habit than from fear of any immediate danger, for you could not see two feet ahead of you. As I walked on, my mind was still occupied with Lina, and I was a prey to melancholy thoughts, quite naturally, considering what I knew about her home life. I hurried, for it was beginning to drizzle; following a path that cut through a thicket which I had to pass to return to Maurezies;—when, as I reached the middle, I caught my feet in a rope stretched across the path, and, as I was walking quickly, I fell flat on the ground, my gun with me. I had barely touched the ground when some men flung themselves upon me, gagged me with a handkerchief, thrust my head into a sack, tied first my hands behind my back and then my legs, took away my knife, fastened me across a horse—and there I was, being carried off!

I had no doubt as to the meaning of this; although I had not heard a word, I was certain that it was a stroke from the Comte de Nansac, and I wondered what he was going to do with me. Would he fling me into the abyss of Le Gour? For a moment I believed so, but I soon saw from the direction we were taking that I was wrong. When we had walked about an hour, I knew from the hollow steps of the horse that we were passing over a bridge. "It is the bridge that crosses the moat of the château!" I said to myself. An instant later the horse stopped, and I was carried, or rather dragged, over some stone steps, and then roughly flung on the ground. Finally, a rope was

passed under my arms, and I soon felt that I was being lowered into emptiness. After a descent which I estimated at eight to ten metres, I touched the ground, where I remained stretched out on my stomach. At the same time the rope, pulled from the end, was drawn up; I heard a sound like that of a slab falling on the stone; and that was all.

"Here I am buried in the oubliettes of l'Herm!" was my first thought. Then I considered how I might set about extricating myself from the uncomfortable position in which I was. But the scoundrels had bound me in such a way that to do this was not at all easy. I tried first to turn over on my back, and after several somersaults I succeeded. After that I tried to rise to my feet, but I was not able to do so, and several times I fell heavily to earth. Bruised and exhausted, I lay motionless a long time; finally having with difficulty rolled myself over several times I found myself against a wall. Turning my back to it, I rubbed against it with the ropes that bound my hands. Not only, however, was this proceeding very difficult, but the ropes were strong; so that after I had rubbed a long time, I stopped, worn out with fatigue. The air, which I breathed with difficulty through the coarse sackcloth, was heavy and close; the stale odor of a damp cellar came to my nostrils, but not the slightest noise, faint or heavy or even distant, reached me. I was in a tomb. One can imagine that I had some sad reflections there. I was condemned to die slowly of hunger in the depths of this dungeon; I knew the

Comte de Nansac too well to doubt it for an instant. I did not lose courage, however, and after I had rested, I began again to rub the cord against the wall, not without taking the skin off my hands. And that rope still held! Fortunately, by feeling about, I found a stone rougher than the others, so that when I had scraped it many times, for about ten hours, I believe, I felt my bonds loosen, and soon my hands were free. The first use I made of them was to take the sack off my head, and the handkerchief from my mouth, after which I untied my legs and stood up.

I was still in the most profound darkness, in pitch blackness. Taking small steps, with my hands on the wall, I soon saw that the underground vault was circular. But all at once an idea occurred to me:—suppose there was a well in the floor of the oubliette?

I thought about it for a moment, and then continued my walk, feeling in advance with my foot to make sure that there was no void before me. When I had come back to my point of departure, which I recognized by finding the fragments of rope under my feet, I realized that I was in one of the dungeons of the towers of l'Herm. After I had made the circle of the walls, I ventured to cross my prison on all fours, feeling my way with outstretched hands, for fear of falling into some well. Finally, when I had crawled about everywhere, I was reassured on this score, but I remained under the horrible certainty of being destined to rot in the bottom of this dungeon. To rot is exactly the word, for dampness oozed from

the walls, which proved to me that I was below the level of the château moat.

It was a long time since I had eaten, at least twenty-four hours, to judge from the pains in my stomach, which greatly fatigued me; where I was, in the absolute darkness, I had only this means of judging time. I sat down on the ground, overwhelmed with despair, my back against the wall, and thought of all those of whom I was fond, especially of my dear Lina, whom I was abandoning defenseless to the persecutions of her abominable mother and that scoundrel Guilhem. This idea seemed to break my heart, and made me suffer more than hunger; but I was soon distracted from it by the thought of my own situation. What awaited me here? A slow, frightful death, the very thought of which made me shiver. I had scarcely any hope. I felt quite sure that when I did not return, Jean would go to the mayor and send someone to notify the Chevalier, and I felt certain that the latter would make an effort to find me. It was probable, I thought, that their first idea would be that the Comte de Nansac had been the cause of my disappearance, but they might easily think he had thrown me into the Gour, with a stone tied to my neck like a dog, just as had happened to so many unfortunate men murdered by brigands whose skeletons are now lying in its unfathomable depths. For himself and his own safety, this would certainly be the best thing to do; but if the Count were determined to get rid of me, he was even more determined to make me suffer a

very slow and painful death. How could Jean and the Chevalier have imagined that I was immured in the dungeons of one of the towers of l'Herm, in an oubliette of which they doubtless knew nothing? That was a difficulty; and, on the other hand, I was quite certain that the Count had taken every precaution, so that in case the château were searched, I should not be found. This terrible thought of being buried alive stabbed me so to the heart, that, with the tortures of hunger I felt, I could not sleep. Before my eyes, inflamed with sleeplessness, I seemed to see fiery palaces, luminous landscapes, which faded into darkness, and followed one another slowly. To escape this torture, I tried to close my eyes, but in front of my lowered, burning eyelids, there passed sorrowful mirages, or red or phosphorescent vapors rose, like the reflections of an enormous conflagration. I was weary of sitting up, and yet I dared not lie down, for my imagination, grown feverish for lack of sleep, and of food, made me dread that I should fall asleep forever. So, in spite of my weakness, I crawled about on all fours over the damp earth; I tried to dig it with my hand; and I wore myself out enlarging some holes I found like the burrows of a great mole; and finally I stopped, at the end of my strength, panting and stretched on the ground. A long time afterwards, I began to explore my tomb again, seeking mechanically, though hopelessly, for some outlet. While I was dragging myself about in this way on all fours, I chanced to put my hands on something that seemed

to me at first like a little pile of small pieces of dead wood; but suddenly, having felt them more carefully, the horrible truth dawned upon me. They were the remains of a skeleton which, rotted by time, were crumbling under my hands.

At this moment I felt despair overwhelm me, and I fell to the earth, crushed, near these human remains that had lain hidden in this spot for many long years. But while I lay there what should I hear but heavy steps overhead, echoing above the vault. I raised myself up and listened. A scarcely audible murmur, like that of men talking at a distance, reached the depths of the dungeon, interspersed with slow heavy steps.

It is the gendarmes making a search, I thought; and, my hope returning, I began to cry out. But at once the noise ceased, the steps grew fainter in the distance, and I slipped back into the deathlike silence that had enveloped me since my descent into the depths of the tomb. Crushed by despair, I sank down on the ground, the horrors of the place disappeared from my tortured thoughts, my head reeled, and I fainted.

A sharp pain in my cheek awoke me, and, putting my hand there, I felt something that let go and fled, while I had the sensation of similar creatures over my body that fled also, terrified by my movement.

This, then, was the explanation of those holes that I had found in the floor of the oubliette; they were old rat-holes. These enormous animals that swarmed in the old walls of the moat, had dug under the foundations of the tower, and with that terrible sense of

smell, which pierces the thickest walls, they had scented a prey, and, mad with hunger, had rushed in. The terrible certainty of being devoured half alive by these disgusting creatures drove me frantic. I tried to break my head against the walls, but I was incapable of standing upright, and even more incapable of achieving the necessary strength. Then I thought of the cords that had bound me, and, groping about for them in this horrible darkness, with difficulty and after long hours, I found them. Having nothing to which I could attach the end of the rope, I made a knot which I slipped about my neck, and I tried to strangle myself. But the prolonged fast had so weakened me that my arms fell back, powerless, and I lay there, inert and motionless.

As soon as I had ceased to move about, the rats, seeing me exhausted, flocked back in crowds, ready to fall upon me. I heard them running about in the dark, and they grew bold enough to come and nibble the leather of my shoes. At this moment the idea of catching one occurred to me, so as to appease the hunger that tortured me. Oh! with what burning appetite did I dream of tearing one of these unclean creatures with my teeth, and devouring him raw and alive!

I waited, and soon I felt them climbing over me, hunting for my hands and face. Several times I tried in vain to grasp them; my hands had no longer the necessary agility and I was not able.

Then, tormented by the hunger which gripped my

entrails, and no longer in my right senses, I lifted my hands to my mouth and tried mechanically to bite them. But I no longer had the strength, and I remained a long time motionless, as if I were dead. Now the rats ran over me without my being able to drive them away. Even their bites left me almost insensible, and I became their prey without having the power to defend myself. It seemed to me that I had been there for eight days; my ears roared, my head could no longer produce a thought, my will was relaxing, and becoming utterly destroyed, I felt life slipping from me, and ended by falling into a stupor that was the forerunner of death.

When I came to myself, I was in a bed. Someone was gently forcing my teeth apart and making me swallow a little broth mixed with wine in a spoon. My eyes, from disuse, could not stand the daylight, and I closed them again at once. My hands and face smarted hotly in spots, where the rats had bitten me, but I did not attribute this pain to any cause. It seemed to me that my skull had been split, that my brain had dissolved, and my head had emptied itself like a gourd. I lay there, incapable of forming an idea, merely breathing, and that very faintly. Then, little by little, with time and care, I began to revive, and recognized Jean at my bedside.

"And Lina?" I asked, feebly.

"Well, you'll see her when you're about again."

Somewhat quieted, I went to sleep again.

The Chevalier came a few days later, and, seeing me better, he said:

"Now you're saved . . . for this time! That goes without saying, like Master Jean's breviary."

I smiled faintly, and thanked him for all their kindness, for I knew that he and his sister had sent the chickens for the soup, the white bread, and some old wine and sugar.

"Bah!" he exclaimed. "That's nothing at all, my poor Jacques."

"Excuse me, M. le Chevalier," said Jean, "without that good wine I'm sure he'd 've gone into the country of the moles."

"Ah! Ah! So much the better, so much the better that my remedy has worked; but, except for that, what does it matter?

"Dog's dung and silver mark,
Will all be one on the Judgment Day!"

This time I laughed a bit more heartily, and the Chevalier went away well pleased, but not before I had begged him to thank the good Mlle. Hermine most heartily for me.

A month later I was on my feet, but still weak, and able to walk only a few steps at a time, with a stick; then, little by little, my strength came back. While I was still in bed, always thinking of Lina, and very much disturbed because I could not see her, I often spoke of her to Jean, who always said something to calm me and make me patient. As soon as I could

understand anything, I asked him how I happened to be there, in his bed; and then he explained that one morning they had found me in the forest on the highway, lying as if dead, my face and hands covered with blood. Everything which I told him of the spot where I had been made him more certain that it was the Comte de Nansac who had kidnapped me. I learned then that the steps which I had heard in the depths of the dungeon had indeed been those of the gendarmes, who, together with the mayor, had made an inspection of the château, on the complaint of the Chevalier. The Count had shown them all about, from the cellars to the attics, and had led them to the prison; but as the slab that closed the oubliette, as well as the whole pavement, was covered with thick layers of dry earth, not one of them suspected that there was a vault underneath. Besides, the mayor was under the Count's thumb, and the gendarmes sometimes lunched at the château when they made their rounds. This brigand, whom they knew to be powerful, overawed them, so that they did their business rather as a matter of form. It must be added in their defense that without doubt they did not consider the Count capable of such a deed.

But the Chevalier, warned by Jean, who had learned from some old men of the existence of an oubliette at l'Herm, had gone back to Montignac one afternoon, and had stirred up the justice of the peace and the gendarmes to make another search, especially underneath the prison. The gendarmes, who felt that

they had been rather lax, were considerably annoyed, particularly because this affair had set all Montignac talking, and the folk there are no cowards. The most exasperated man of all was old Cassius, of whom the Chevalier had spoken to us. He went about the town saying that they ought to have the Revolution over again, since the lesson had not been severe enough for some people who wished to begin again the old tyrannical ways.

Because of all this clamor and the firm insistence of the Chevalier, it was decided that a new investigation should be made the following morning. But in the night a hurried warning was sent to the Count; by whom, we never knew. That morning, however, I was found on the highway, as I have said; this cut short any further search. Besides, the courts of justice cared so little about clearing up this affair that I was not even questioned.

As for me, as soon as strength and will had returned to me, I remembered in my heart the first oath I had ever sworn,—to be avenged on the Comte de Nansac; and from that time onwards the thought never left me. But at first, something more than vengeance tormented me; this was the desire to see my Lina again. I was impatient until I could walk well enough again; and as soon as I was able, and in spite of Jean's trying to make me put it off until the next Sunday, I went to Bars, and waited, as I usually did, until the congregation came out from mass. Bertrille came forth first alone, and, seeing me, came towards me.

"Is Lina there?" I asked her, without any salutation. She looked at me with such an air of sad astonishment that something gripped my heart. And just at this moment Mathive came out of church dressed in mourning. I repeated my question in a sort of frightful trance. Bertrille drew me to one side:

"Then you know nothing?"

"But what is it? You're killing me."

"Alas! my Jacquou, you will never see poor Lina again! . . . She is dead!"

"Oh, God!" I cried, stunned by the news.

Then Bertrille led me further away on a lonely path, and told me what had happened.

In order to keep her Guilhem, who was continually threatening to leave because he saw clearly that when Lina was mistress in her own right it would be an end of his fun, Mathive, overcoming her jealousy, had determined to marry him to her daughter. Naturally the poor child resisted; so that there were continual quarrels in the house and beatings, that brought all the neighbors to their doorsteps. It came to such a point that Mathive gave herself up to beating her daughter nearly every day to force her to consent. So that it happened one afternoon, when she had scolded her, cuffed her, pulled her hair and beaten her so severely that she carried the marks on her face, the poor child, terrified, had escaped from the hands of her miserable mother, who was capable of killing her at any moment. When she had hurried to Maurezies to tell me that she could no longer endure

it, and to consult me about what she should do, she had come across one of our neighbors whom she had asked where I was.

"Ah, poor girl! Who knows where he is! For three days and three nights no living soul has seen him. He was out hunting hares at night. Without doubt he has been murdered and thrown into the Gour."

At that, poor Lina rushed off desperate, not knowing what she was about, and climbed up over La Granval. The next day, while they were picking me up on the road, they found her little sabots on the bank of the Gour. . . .

When I heard this, I fled to the forest, mad with grief, and, like a mortally wounded animal, I flung myself into a thicket, where I wept until evening, sobbing, biting the grass, and sometimes howling with despair like a maddened wolf. Then, when night had fallen, I came back to Maurezies, and went to bed without supper.

From that day on, I began every evening to roam about such villages in the neighborhood of l'Hermas Prisse, Les Bessedes, Le Mayne, La Lande, Martilat, La Laquens, La Bourdarie, Monplaisir, and others where people had suffered most from the evil doings of the Comte de Nansac. Everywhere I went I recalled to men's minds the many petty tyrannies of that scoundrel, his wickedness, the cold ferocity with which he abused his power, his insolence, and that of his son and their guests towards women. In each

one I revived the memory of what he in particular had had to suffer from this hateful lord of contraband. I tried to arouse these poor people, bowed down under this shameful tyranny; to make them feel that they were still men and that they would be free of this brigand the day they had the courage to take up their pitchforks and resist him.

They all thought as I did, but there were cowards among them who sought to put off the moment of action; and these men, although they agreed with me, would make difficulties, saying that the Count was very powerful, that he had always done as he liked, and that to attack him was to spit at the sun and risk the gallows.

"You know very well, my poor Jacquou, that your father paid heavily for rebelling against that wicked man."

"Listen," I told them, "they cannot condemn the whole of our villages to the galleys; the leader will pay for it all. Very well, I will take the blame upon myself. For that matter, my friends, the times are no longer the same. We are no longer in 1815; we are in 1830; and from what I have heard said to M. de Galibert of Fanlac—and he is a prince of gallant gentlemen—the revolution is not far off, thanks to the behavior of those who, like the Comte de Nansac, would like to bring back the old order of things."

In affairs of this sort, you must usually be very careful to whom you speak, so as to avoid traitors; but there was no danger here. The Count had noth-

ing but enemies in the countryside; his farmers were, perhaps, his worst ones, as they were most exposed to his villainy; besides, they never stayed more than a year with him.

For three months I went all about the countryside in this way, seeing people. Finally, by exhorting and encouraging them, I managed to enlist them all on my side. When I saw that their minds were really made up, I gave them a rendezvous for a certain night in a piece of waste land to the north of Maurezie.

At eleven o'clock I was there with Jean and one of our neighbors. I expected about forty or fifty men, but I was much astonished when I saw many women coming with the men.

The spot was in a little upland surrounded by woods, and far from any road. In the rocky, sandy soil there grew a few tufts of thlaspi and wild everlasting, and here and there a few juniper trees of a grayish green. In one spot, on the dark edge of the undergrowth, the silver trunk of a birch tree, sown there by the wind, seemed like a ghost in its shroud. In the midst was a heap of giant stones called Peyre-Male, or the wolf's hut, the ruins of an ancient druidical altar pulled down, according to Bonal, at the time of Tiberius, who caused the monuments of our ancient national worship to be destroyed and its priests put to death. It was here that old Huguette, the sorceress of the Cros-de-Mortier, made her sacrifices by night. Those who had need of her divinations came to this spot carrying a cock or a hen, as the case might be,

which the old woman bled, with a mass of absurd ceremonies. Finally, having sprinkled the stone with the fowl's blood, she opened its belly with a cut of her knife and rummaged about inside by moonlight to draw out into view the heart and liver, the omens regarding the matter about which she had been consulted.

The sorceress is dead now, and the sacrifices of fowls have ceased; but there are some old folk still living who witnessed them.

As the people came out of the woods, they grouped themselves about the Peyre-Male and waited, leaning on their heavy sticks. When I saw that everyone had arrived, I got up and, addressing the women, I asked them why they had come there.

"And do you imagine," said an old woman from Prisse, "that we have nothing to avenge?"

"Do you think that we are more cowardly than the men?" asked another.

And then, climbing up on one of the big stones, I repeated my first exhortations to the villagers, and pointed out very clearly the misery of our present situation. While I was speaking, recounting at length the grievances of the countryside against the Comte de Nansac, my words re-opened the wounds of these poor people, and in the shadow I saw tears glisten in their eyes. They were a curious sight, these peasants assembled by night in that wild spot. They were all wretchedly clothed,—with drugget jackets faded by wear; old, discolored blouses, soiled with work;

trousers of coarse linen or fustian, patched with dissimilar fragments. Some old men like Jean had worn cloaks frayed at the bottom, and other poor devils of tatterdemalions were half-covered with rags that no longer had either shape or color. Most of them wore blue or white cotton caps, with a little tassel; dirty caps, often in holes, that allowed thick locks of hair to escape. Others wore great round Périgord hats, with limp brims, that had lost their shape from age and were discolored by sun and rain. None of them wore shoes; all were barefoot, their sabots filled with straw or hay. The women hid their printed calico bodices and their drugget skirts under wretched capes of fustian, or covered their shoulders with one of those coarse fichus which we call in patois *coullets*.

They formed, indeed, a true picture of the poor Périgord peasant of former times, deliberately kept in ignorance, badly nourished, badly clothed, always toiling and moiling, counting for nothing, and despised by the rich.

When I had finished my speech, I said: "Now speak! your fate lies in your hands, you need nothing but courage. Are you firmly decided to avenge yourselves on the brigand of Nansac, to overthrow this evil power, to free yourselves forever from this family of wolves?"

"Yes, yes!" cried all, in a hollow voice.

Then, having made them turn towards the Château de l'Herm, I bade them take oath, after the ancient custom of our ancestors, as my mother had once made

me swear long ago. Like me, each one spat in his right hand, and, having traced a cross in it with the first finger of his left, he stretched it out open, and said in a low voice after me:

“Down with the Nansacs!”

“That is well, my friends; and now let each one keep himself ready. One of these nights, when the moment is favorable, you will hear three short, regular blasts of a horn, followed by a long blast. Come here then quickly, all of you. Vengeance will be near, and our deliverance in our hands!”

At that, the crowd dispersed into the woods and each one went back to his own village.

A young boy from Prisse, bold and clever, watched the château for me, and kept me informed what was going on there. One evening, as Jean and I were finishing supper, I saw him coming.

“All the gentlemen that were at the château have left. It seems that the Count’s son has gone back to Paris; now there remain only the Count, the young ladies, the chaplain, and the guards and servants.”

“Ah!” I said, getting up, “so the day has come! Look, my boy; you must run to La Lande and to Mayne and tell François at the home of Bourru and big Michelon to repeat the blasts of my horn when they hear them. After that, you will go and hide at the outskirts of the château, and when you have made the round of the moat and are sure that all the lights are out, you must come and tell me at Peyre-Male. Here, take a drink and go.”

And I gave him a glassful of wine left over from what the Chevalier had sent to me. The boy swallowed it at a gulp, wiped his lips on his hand, and ran off.

About nine o'clock I took Jean's gun, for mine had disappeared at the time of my capture, and went straight to the upland of Peyre-Male. It was towards the end of May. It had rained during the day, and great black clouds slipped slowly across the sky, hiding the stars. The moon had set, so that it was also very dark. I walked slowly, planning just what we should do in order to succeed. My plan was to attack the château, and after I had taken it, to set it on fire, so as to rid the country of this family of brigands. I hoped very much that in the assault I should meet the Count and kill him in combat, because he deserved death for all the evil he had done, if only that he had done to me. And how many others had been his victims! But I reserved him for myself. It seemed to me that because of the venomous hatred I bore him he belonged to me. Also, I was counting on outdoing myself, so as to get him face to face with me, and strike him down at my feet in the heat of battle. The reason back of my ardent desire was, I felt in the depths of my soul, that if he was made a prisoner, I could never kill him in cold blood, or have him killed while he was unarmed and helpless. And, although my hatred protested against it, this fact that I could not treat him so, filled me with pride, because I felt that I was superior to the wretch who had wished to

kill me by a slow fire, as they say, after having trapped me in a cowardly ambushade.

And as I reflected on this, I told myself that even if the Count should escape with his life, he would scarcely be any the better off. The fact was that for some time rumors had been spreading that he was ruined. They said that he had squandered all his fortune, which, from the life he had led, was easy to believe. People had got wind of his predicament, in the fact that for the past two or three months bailiffs had been coming to the house. They had been none too well received; one of them, who had spoken of drawing up a written statement, had been obliged to jump into the ditch and escape drenched with water and covered with slime up to his armpits.

If that were so, the burning of the château would mean his ruin; for insurance companies, quite new at that time, were unknown in our region. Perhaps to be thus reduced to poverty and impotence would be, for this proud man, this ferocious tyrant, a punishment worse than death.

One other thing concerned me. I was sure that the attack would be no easy matter, and that the Count and his men would not let themselves be dislodged without resistance; so I sought for some means of accomplishing my end without exposing my people too much. Suddenly I realized that to do this, we must attack the château unexpectedly and take it quickly. I thought for a long time about the way in which we should set about it; and, after weighing

and examining everything and mapping out my plan in my head, I waited.

The weather was mild; the warm, wet earth stirred with life. A slight breeze, passing lightly over the waste land, made the slender grasses shiver, and brought me the odor of damp woods, of opening buds, and from afar the drifting fragrance of the white hedgerows, in blossom along the roads. Under the heap of enormous stones on which I was sitting, a rat in his hole was nibbling a chestnut from his winter store. At times a night-bird would cross the upland in his heavy, noiseless flight, uttering a melancholy call to his mate. In this fragrant night, one seemed to feel once more the germination of the fertile earth, inciting all living things to love. Then my thoughts turned towards my dead Lina, and my bitter regret, together with my hot anger against her murderers, mingled with the dear memory of my poor sweetheart; so that I sat dreaming a long time, with my head in my hands.

A quick step at the edge of the waste land made me rise to my feet; it was the boy from Prisse.

"The whole château is asleep," he told me.

"That's good, son!"

And, putting my horn to my mouth, I sent in the direction of La Lande and Mayne three short blasts in succession, followed by a fourth long one, which died away like the bellowing of a bull under the ax of a butcher.

Two horns answered me at once, throwing out into

the night their sinister summons. Soon those people who lived nearest had arrived; and three-quarters of an hour later all the village people were there, about ninety in all, including the women, who carried sticks, hoes and goads. The men were armed with guns, iron pitchforks, gibes, hatchets, and the blacksmith of Meyrignac had brought the biggest hammer in his shop.

When I saw they were all there, I assembled them in a circle, and going into the center, I explained to them at once that in order to succeed without too greatly exposing ourselves, we must act promptly. The first gate, that of the court, since it was only bolted, could easily be opened quickly by a man who crossed the water and climbed the wall of the moat, clinging to the little trees that grew from the crevices in the stones. But the entrance gate of the château was made of heavy oaken planks, reinforced with great spikes, solidly closed with a strong lock, and barred from the inside with two heavy pieces of wood. It would not be easy to attack this gate with axes, because of the nails; nor even to burst it in with the heavy hammer of the blacksmith. For, during all this time, the Count and his guards, not to mention the young ladies, who could handle a gun very well, would be shooting at us from the loop-holes. Therefore we needed some powerful instrument.

"Do you know of any big beam over there, some tree that has been cut down and had its branches removed?"

"At l'Herm, in the village," said some of the men,

"old Bertillou is having a barn built; there are some strong beams over there."

"That's just what we want. Thirty of the strongest men, with their handkerchiefs rolled and knotted together, will carry the beam, two by two, fifteen on each side. When they are in the court, they will run at full speed against the gate of the château, and will dash against it the end of the beam, which ought to project a little in front of the foremost men. As the gate will certainly not fall at the first blow, they will then draw back to make room, and will repeat the act. During this time, five or six of those who have guns will watch the loop-holes that protect the entrance and fire at them when they see the muzzle of a gun. At the same time, twenty men, who will have taken all the ladders from the haylofts, on their way through the village, will cross the moat, and climb quickly in at the windows to divide those on the inside. Meanwhile, a number of others, spread out about the château, will shoot at the windows and make a great noise. In this way the Count and his men will not know which way to turn, and we shall have them."

After all this had been carefully explained, I assigned each man to his post, and when everything was agreed upon, I added:

"Let it be well understood that we shall not touch a button in the château. We are honest men who are avenging ourselves, and not robbers!"

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed all, in a low voice.

Then I asked:

"What hour is it? You, over there!"

The old people raised their eyes to the sky, and noted the position of the stars between the passing clouds.

"It must be about eleven o'clock," said some of them.

"Let us start; and do not make any noise."

Just as I was setting out, I felt someone take my arm, and turned about.

"Ah, my poor Jean!" I exclaimed. "You promised to stay quietly in bed and let the young fellows do the work."

"Give me the gun," he answered, "it would only bother you when you are giving orders. I still have a good eye. I will watch the loop-holes. Let me help. It pleases me to see this wolf driven out of his lair."

"As you wish, then."

So I gave him the gun, and we set out.

We walked in silence. There was no sound but the dull noise of a band of people tramping over the earth, and the crackling of branches when we went through a thicket. Once on the high road which comes from Thenon and passes near l'Herm, we went more quietly, and the nearer we got the more precautions we took. Even the women, who are usually chatterers, did not utter a word. Two hundred feet before we left the forest, which came right up to the village, those men who were to carry the beam ar-

ranged their handkerchiefs and placed themselves together. Those who were to scale the château did likewise. Then everyone started off marching again. The dogs in the villages of Prisse and l'Herm had been shut up in the stables and houses, so that their barking would not make too much noise. While those who had been chosen for the task went to get the ladders from the barns, the rest of us waited. The night was still cloudy and warm. In the midst of the vineyards queerly shaped peach-trees could be dimly seen in the shadow. At the edge of the fields the spreading nut-trees lifted their round heads towards the gray sky. About the houses the hemp fields spread their heavy odor. Along a court a blossoming alder-bush, growing on an old wall, shed its fragrance on the air; and nearby in the silence of the night a nightingale was singing softly. My heart was hammering now, but not because I was afraid for myself; since the death of my dear Lina, life meant nothing to me, and I would have sold it cheaply. I was afraid for all these brave men who were following me. And I dreaded lest I should not succeed, knowing well that if I did not, the Count would make them pay dearly for the damage.

As the others had come back, however, with the ladders, I drove these ideas out of my head, and thought only of what we had to do.

When we passed in front of the house of Bertillou, those who had knotted their handkerchiefs took the largest beam, and advanced slowly and silently, keep-

ing in step, over the heather that was rotting in the village streets. Then, moving to the front, I had a nimble boy go down into the moat; and soon the gate of the enclosure was open. But in spite of every precaution, this could not be done without some noise; so that the great hunting dogs of the Count barked furiously from the depths of their kennels. Fortunately, as they were in the habit of barking, the château people paid no attention to them.

At this moment the beam arrived, moving like a monstrous centipede, and entered the court. At fifteen paces the men began to run, hurling themselves against the door, and giving it a violent blow that re-echoed up the winding staircase; but the door did not yield. While our men were moving backward to get room to repeat the stroke, frightened heads began to appear at the windows of the château, cries were heard, and soon lights began to move rapidly about the interior. At this moment, a second blow of the beam shook the door.

"Courage, friends! It is going to yield!" I cried out.

At the same instant our men posted about the château began to fire, and those who had climbed the ladders broke in the windows with a great noise.

While the men who carried the beam were drawing back to strike the door again, gun-barrels were passed through the loop-holes which defended the entrance, and several shots were fired by those within as well as by our men. Then the women began to scream,

seeing a wounded man let go of the beam; but a big handsome Amazon ran to take his place. By this same discharge I felt myself wounded in the cheek and shoulder, but in my excitement I paid no attention to it.

"Go at it!" I cried. "Strike hard! The door is going to fall this time!"

Then, with a vigorous rush, inspired by our cries, our men dashed upon the door, which yielded, its lock torn off, its bars broken, its hinges twisted. As it still held a little, the blacksmith knocked it down with his heavy hammer.

"Forward!"

And, seizing an ax from a man, I flung myself upon the stairway and leaped up it four steps at a time, followed by all of the men, some of them with lanterns. I soon reached the landing of the first floor, where stood the Count and his daughters as well as Mascret, all of them half-clad and hurriedly reloading their guns.

"Ah, brigand!" I cried, rushing at the Count, with my ax raised.

As he had not finished reloading his gun, he took it by the muzzle and tried to beat me down with the butt.

Luckily I parried it with my ax, which fell on it. Then, raising it again with a furious gesture, and paying no heed to the fierce blows which Mascret and the youngest daughter were raining on my sides with the butts of their muskets, I aimed a blow at the

Count which should have split his head. He gave a great leap backwards, escaped the blow, and found himself near the entrance door of the grand hall, where, fortunately for him, he was seized, along with the guard, by those of our men who had scaled the windows after driving back the head huntsman and the other servants.

"Ah, my friends! You do me a wrong!" I said, lowering my ax, not willing to strike him now that he was unable to defend himself.

"Let no one do harm to anyone," I added, noticing that the Count and the others were being rather roughly handled.

Three of the young ladies, seeing that their father was captured, had escaped to the floor above. But the youngest, who was called Galiote, defended herself like a real little devil and drove off with blows of her musket those who tried to disarm her. Finally, in order to capture her without wounding her, they tore down a big curtain from a window in the room, and flung it over her, and while she tried to disentangle herself, they took away her gun, making it impossible for her to harm anyone.

After the Count, Mascret, the head huntsman, and the others, had their hands fastened with the window-cords, they were all brought down into the court. Then, followed by some men, I climbed the stairs to find the three young ladies who, less brave than their youngest sister, had fled. After forcing several barricaded doors, we found them hidden in the depths

of a closet, behind the dresses hanging on the wall. Trembling with fear they flung themselves at the feet of those peasants whom they had so many times ill-treated.

"Have no fear," I told them; "we don't belong to the family of Nansac; we don't insult or strike women. Go and dress yourselves and come down at once."

And I went down myself. In the dark court, lighted only by a few lanterns carried by some peasants was the Count, his hands tied, wearing merely his trousers and his shirt, which was quite in tatters. Near him cowered all the people of the château, surrounded by the villagers, men and women, who reproached them for their evil deeds with oaths and menacing gestures. Some were even beginning to cry out that they ought to give the Nansacs a taste of their own medicine. The Count was very pale, but tried to keep his self-possession before the "paysantaille," as he used to say; but one saw all the same that he was in both rage and fear, feeling himself at the mercy of this angry crowd that was steadily growing larger by the addition of old men and children from the villages who had been wakened by the shots.

As I arrived, a gray-haired woman—the woman who had been the first to respond to my appeals for vengeance over at Peyre-Male, was pushing the people furiously aside. She aimed a blow at the Count with her stick, which, as he dodged it, fell upon his neck.

"You dirty scoundrel! My girl has been ruined by your scamp of a son; you shall pay for him!"

Others joined their voices to hers, shrieking their grievances against the Count and shaking their fists in a rage under his nose, while one of them already had him by the throat, and sticks and pruning-bills were raised over his head. It was time to intervene.

The blood was running from my cheek, and I felt the wound in my shoulder under my jacket; but in spite of that, I scattered the crowd and, raising my arm, cried:

"Stop! . . . Until now, good people, I have advised you well, haven't I? Well, listen to me once more. You have all been injured by this man and those belonging to him; there are no rascally tricks he has not played on you. . . . "

"Yes, yes!"

And all those about the Count, shaking their fists or brandishing a weapon, spat his scoundrelly deeds in his face.

"But you, Jacquou," a woman called to me, "you have suffered more than any of us."

"That's true, Nadale. Because of this man my father died in the galleys, my mother died broken-hearted in utter poverty, my poor Lina flung herself into the Gour, thinking I had disappeared forever. As for me, he kept me four days and four nights in the bottom of an oubliette in his prison, and if I did not die slowly of hunger, eaten half alive by rats, it is thanks to the Chevalier de Galibert. . . . "

"Ah, you deny it, wretch?" I shouted, seeing the Count shake his head.

"Go, take a ladder into the prison," I said to three or four men about me, "lift the flagstone and go down into that tomb; you will find there the pieces of rope with which he tied me, and which with great difficulty I wore off against the walls. You will also see the rotted bones, falling into dust, of some unfortunate who was flung there long ago."

While these men went off to the prison, I noticed the youngest daughter of the Count. She stood close to him, half-dressed, in a haughty attitude. Her thick, tawny locks burned like golden lousis, and fell in a mass over her bare shoulders. Her close-pressed lips expressed disdain; her slightly curled nostrils were distended with anger; her dark blue eyes shot me a look of hatred, sharp as a sword-blade.

But in those days my eyes were not cold either, and I looked at her fixedly, without winking. She was a beautiful girl, eighteen years old, tall, well-made, bold,—who stood there without shame or embarrassment, half-nude in the midst of all that crowd. Not that she was a wanton, for she was the only one of the four sisters against whom no one said anything. This attitude came from her disdain of all these peasants who, in her eyes, were not even men.

I felt shame for her, and I said to her:

"Go and dress yourself!"

She glared at me without answering, her bare arms still crossed on her breast, and did not move.

"Take your young lady away," I said to one of

the maids, "or I will have our women dress her at once."

Then she made up her mind to go, but if her eyes had been pistols I should have been dead.

The men had returned, however, and brought the ends of the rope and the fragments of bones from the oubliette.

"Now will you deny it, wicked Crozat?" I asked the Count.

He became even paler, closed his eyes and did not answer.

"We must hang him, by God! We must hang him!" cried some of the people.

"If we hang him," I cried, "he will suffer only for one short moment; in two minutes all will be over. We can do better than that. You have all of you seen near La Vézère, on your way to the celebration of Fonpeyrine, the ruins of the château of Reignac, in the parish of Tursac. Before the Revolution a nobleman lived there who was such a scoundrel and so dangerous to women that he was called in the countryside 'the goat of Reignac.' Well, it was my grandfather who made those ruins, with the help of the men of Tursac, who grew tired of that wretch's evil deeds. When they had burned his château, the 'goat of Reignac,' already overwhelmed with debts, crawled about the country for a short time, and then died of rage and poverty. That is how we shall get rid of this one. . . .

"Since you agree that I have suffered most of all from this man, let me pass judgment upon him. The worst punishment that can come to him is not death, but ruin; that a man so proud and haughty should have to drag out a despised existence. And this will surely happen, for without a sou he will have no more friends,—that is, unless the other nobles love him and admire him more than the peasants do."

Here the Count tried to laugh.

"You know very well, Crozat, that they do not look on you as one of themselves, that they remember your grandfather, the water-carrier of Auvergne."

And I went on:

"Just as the men of Tursac burned Reignac, so we must burn l'Herm. The total destruction of this robbers' den will complete the ruin of this pretended nobleman, who will have to beg a scornful pity from château to château; that will be his greatest punishment.

"Believe me, my friends, I come of a race that understands these things. In the time of Henry IV, one of my ancestors, head of a band of peasant rebels, burned the châteaux of those nobles who acted like tyrants towards the poor peasants; and it is from him we get the nickname of Croquant. My grandfather burned Reignac, as I have just said; and I began thirteen years ago by burning the forest of l'Herm; to-day I am going to send this château up in flames!"

"That's right! That's right!"

"Then pile up fagots everywhere in the kitchen and

the lower rooms; bring some brandy kegs and some oil tanks from the cellar; and we shall have a fine bonfire."

While everyone ran about this work, the maid came out of the château and approached me.

"Mademoiselle will not come down."

"I'll go," I answered. "Come and show me where she is."

When I had gone upstairs, I found the young girl dressed and seated in a corner of the room.

"You must come down!" I told her. "We are going to burn the château!"

She gave me a hostile look without replying.

"If you do not come of your own accord, you shall come by force," and I went towards her.

At this moment she lifted a little dagger, and tried to strike me, but I seized her wrist as it descended, and disarmed her.

"Although you give it to me rather under compulsion, I shall keep it for the present," I told her, putting the dagger into a pocket of my jacket. And at the same time, seizing her about the waist, I carried her off in spite of her resistance.

What a queer creature man is! In spite of all my hatred for the Comte de Nansac, a hatred that was reflected on all those belonging to him, I was much stirred as I carried this beautiful creature through the rooms and corridors. The feeling of her breath on my face, and of the superb body pressed against me but struggling to escape, sent racing through my mind

some of those mad, brutal thoughts that come to hardened troopers when they are taking a town by storm. The sight of the blood which fell from my cheek on Galiote's forehead completed my intoxication. And we were alone, for the maid had dashed off down the stairs, terrified at the thought of fire. I stopped short while I was crossing a corridor.

"Keep still!" I said to her roughly, plunging my gaze deep into her eyes, and holding her even more tightly, while she tried to scratch me. She understood and did not stir again. An instant later I set her on her feet near her father.

Then, since everything was ready, I took a lantern from one of the men; but just as I was going through the great hall, a voice cried out:

"But the chaplain!"

Confound it! No one had thought of him!

"Go and find him," I said, "and hurry!"

A few minutes later the great Dom Enjalbert reached the court, dragged by three or four men who had found him hidden in the garret. The unhappy man was squealing like a pig about to be bled, and only stopped in order to beg for mercy in a pitiful voice.

"Come, keep still, brawler! Don't you see all the others standing there? . . . Is no one left? Forward, then!"

And, going into the château, I split open with my ax the two casks of brandy, which instantly spread over the floor; then I set fire to them and went out.

Through the windows, which we had opened to fan the fire, you could see blue flames rising, licking the wall, enveloping the furniture, climbing up the curtains, and setting on fire the fagots heaped in the great hall. A quarter of an hour later, an enormous pyre flamed up to the ceiling, and the fire attacked the adjacent rooms. The bays were lighted up one after another as the fire spread, and an hour later the whole interior was nothing but an immense furnace vomiting torrents of flame from every aperture which licked the outside walls like burning tongues. Then the fire leaped up the stairway, reached the upper floors, and soon the old chestnut timberwork, heated by the blaze, caught like slivers of hemp stalk. Then the slates began to rain down into the court, heated by the burning ceilings, and we had to draw back. Finally the roof fell in with a crash; flames leaped into the air through the cross-beams, throwing red reflections far away on the slopes, while at Rouffignac and at Saint-Geyrac the tocsin was frantically pealing.

"Yes, yes! Ring! Ring!"

When the people, awakened by the bells, saw it was the Château de l'Herm that was burning, they did not disturb themselves, but said:

"That is no great misfortune!"

And if a few of them came, it was only out of curiosity.

Although this old woodwork was blazing beautifully, the beams and rafters, which were very strong, resisted for a long time; but at length, towards morn-

ing, the framework gave way, dragging down the beams of the lower floors, and throwing up towards the sky millions of sparks. Then there remained within the blackened walls only fragments of charred wood, burning on a great pile of embers.

At this moment I heard two men wrangling behind me, and, turning, I saw that they were quarreling over a double-barreled gun, which had been taken from the château people.

"It's not worth while quarreling over the bishop's cope, my friends; you know what was agreed upon,—no one was to carry off a button!" And, taking the gun, I went and flung it through a window into the flames. Then I came back.

"Now that justice is done, let all these people go," I said, pointing out the Count and those who belonged to him,—all pale and shivering in the fresh morning air, in spite of that great burning brazier, from which clouds of bluish smoke were still rising.

When they were untied and had gone off in the direction of their nearest farm, I added:

"And all of you, remember that I alone have set fire to the château; lay the blame upon me for all that has happened. I will take the responsibility for everything."

As I felt sure that it would not be long before I received a visit from the gendarmes, I went straight to Thenon, along with two others who were wounded, to have the bullets extracted from our flesh.

The next day at dawn, someone knocked loudly on the door. Jean got up and went over to it, saying:

"The gendarmes are here!"

"Tell them I'm coming."

And when I had dressed myself, I gave him the dagger belonging to the demoiselle Galiothe:

"Keep this weapon for me, Jean, and farewell!"

The gendarmes, having chained my hands, put me between them, and set off, first for Prisse, then l'Herm, sending the frightened children into hiding as they passed. After they had assembled everyone within the enclosure wall of the château, before the still smoking ruins, the justice of the peace and the mayor began endless interrogations. But it was no easy matter. They had to drag answers from people as if with a corkscrew, and even that did not get them very far; for these answers did not tell them much. As for me, I confessed proudly that I was the sole guilty one, and that I had done it all myself. But they said that as far as the capture of the château was concerned, that was impossible. Finally, on the strength of the reports given by the mayor and the accusations of the Count, the judge issued orders, and the gendarmes collected at random five or six peasants, from among those reputed to be bad characters and undesirable subjects. Then, having chained us two by two, they led us away to Montignac.

In the morning they roused us early from the foul place in which we had slept on straw, to take us to

Sarlat. To the police magistrate who questioned us, I replied as I had to the justice of the peace, that I had done everything, lighted the fire, and the rest; the others, as had been agreed upon, blamed it all upon me. As it was impossible, however, that I could have done it all alone, the magistrate determined to make us confess; but he had to deal with men more determined than he. After that he left us in peace for a few days, and a great investigation began. All the men of those villages about l'Herm were summoned to the town hall at Rouffignac, where the public prosecutor, the police magistrate, and a clerk of the court were sitting, assisted by several court-attendants. But they never blackened their paper with written testimonies; no one knew anything. All of them had come when they heard the tocsin ring, or saw the fire; as to what had taken place beforehand no one had the least idea. As the officers, however, did not wish to return with an empty game-bag, they chose three men from all this crowd to come and join us in the prison of Sarlat.

In this prison we were not too badly off. The jailer, who had the entire care of the prisoners, used to have his daughter help him when he brought us our soup. This daughter was a tall, pale girl, who looked as if she were suffering from lung trouble. She showed great interest in us, especially in me, whom she took, I think, to be the captain of some celebrated band of robbers. From time to time she would bring me compresses to put on my shoulder, which still

smarted fiercely; and, under the pretext of making sure that we were not trying to escape, she came ten times a day to the barred windows, which opened out on the little court surrounded by high walls, where we used to go for exercise. There she would tell me what people in the town were saying about us. At her request I told her my own story, which interested her so much that one evening she offered to let me escape.

"Poor child," I said to her, "I am very grateful to you for that, and I shall never forget your kind heart; but you may be sure that I would rather cut my throat than abandon those who have followed me. Besides, your father would suffer severely for it; you know that."

They kept us for more than a month and a half at Sarlat. At first, the magistrate sent for us almost every day, to question us, and principally to question me. The wretch knew his trade, and would sometimes ask me questions that were double-edged, like a tripe-seller's knife, questions from which I had some trouble in extricating myself. When that happened, I would act like a dolt who understood nothing, in order to give myself time to think. The others!—they knew nothing, had seen and heard nothing, except the bells ringing for the fire, which had made them come to l'Herm. Finally, seeing that they would not get much out of us, the magistrate ended by leaving us in peace and settled his business all alone.

Although we were not very badly off there, I grew

very weary, for, as the Chevalier used to say: "There is no beautiful prison, and no ugly love affair;" and then I was impatient to be tried. I was pleased therefore, when one morning the jailer woke us early.

"You are leaving for Périgueux," he said.

When we were ready, he gave each one of us a piece of bread; then the gendarmes came and fastened us together, two by two.

Just as we were leaving, the jailer's daughter ran out and said to me:

"May God protect you! I shall burn a candle for you all!"

And while she said this, she looked at us with moist eyes and in such a way that I knew she was saying this to me, under cover of addressing all of them. That touched my heart.

"Many thanks," I answered her, "many thanks for your kindness!"

In those days they did not take prisoners away in wagons or in railways as they do now, for the good reason that there were no railways and hardly any wagons, and what there were were never entered by poor folk.

There had been so much talk of our affair in the region about Sarlat, at the markets and fairs and on Sundays before the church doors, that all along the road those who saw us go by would say:

"There are the men who burned l'Herm."

And they would give us something to drink, which we did not refuse, for the heat was great.

It took us three days to make the journey, but I must explain that we did not walk quickly, for several of us were wearing the heavy sabots in which we had been arrested. Our first halting-place was at Montignac, where they shut us up in the foul jail that we were already acquainted with. As we were arriving, a tall old man who, with several others, was watching us, called out to us:

"Good courage, citizens!"

"Thanks," I answered, "many thanks! We shall not lack that!"

Later I learned that the old man was the Cassius of whom M. de Galibert had once spoken. He was a kind man, for since he could do nothing else for us he found means to pass to us a horn of snuff for those of us who used it.

The second day we only went two long leagues, as far as Thenon; but the third day was hard, especially for those who were dragging their sabots about. For it was a long stretch, and we arrived late at Périgueux, where they at once shut us up in the prison, which at this time was in the former Couvent des Augustins, in the direction of Tourny.

The next day the president of the assizes came to question me, and asked if I had counsel.

"Yes, sir," I answered, "our counsel is M. Vidal-Fongrave."

"Ah! M. Vidal-Fongrave?"

"Yes, sir; he is defending all of us."

And then I understood from his astonishment that

our case impressed him favorably, for M. Fongrave, the "Honest Man," as he was called, had a reputation for not defending unjust causes.

I had written him from Sarlat, begging him to defend us, and I had told him in detail what had happened. Since we had arrived at Périgueux he had often come to the prison and seen us all, especially me, so as to understand the whole affair thoroughly. I remember one day when I had explained my plan to him, and told him how I had set to work to break into the château, he had said to me familiarly, since he had seen me when I was little:

"You ought to have been a soldier; you have the hand of that trade."

"On my word, M. Fongrave, I drew a good number, and I had no wish to enlist; I love my liberty too well."

Afterwards, in talking over our defense, he told me that a great number of people from l'Herm and the neighboring villages had been cited as witnesses, and that he hoped that the testimony of all these victims of the Count would weigh in the decision of the jury.

The day on which our trial began was the 29th of July, 1830. There was great excitement in the law-courts, and the lawyers and all those who had come out of curiosity were discussing the news from Paris which announced the Revolution. The witnesses called by the prosecuting attorney were the Count, his daughters, and all the people of the château. No other

person had seen anything. In a case that involves many people it is rare not to find some scoundrel who has been bribed to betray the others; but there was nothing of that sort here. Not one failed us. The Nansacs accused me violently, as did Dom Enjalbert, who related so many things one would have thought that he alone knew what had taken place. He made me so impatient that I finally said to him:

"And how could you see all that when you were hidden behind a chest in the attic?"

Everyone burst out laughing; and this shut him up completely.

The three older girls also stretched the truth somewhat; and this convinced me that those who had been most frightened were those who made the most violent accusations against me. For the youngest girl testified nothing but the truth. As the president, in order to adorn the case, let it be understood that when I went to seek her, I had tried to violate her, she said decisively that nothing of the kind had happened, that I was the leader of that band of brigands who had attacked the château, that I alone had set fire to it, that she regretted very much having merely wounded me with her bullet, but that otherwise she had nothing to accuse me of.

"However, mademoiselle," replied the president, "the accused Ferral had scratches on his face and you yourself had blood on yours."

"I may have scratched him with my nails in my struggles when he was carrying me out of the château.

As for the blood on my forehead, it fell on me from the wound in his cheek."

"Come, mademoiselle; perhaps you feel some quite natural confusion in confessing this attempt. But reassure yourself; your reputation cannot suffer in any possible way. Tell us frankly the whole truth."

"I've told you everything, monsieur. I hate the accused, but I have no personal grievance against him. I must even add that without him my father would certainly have been killed by the furious mob."

"That's enough; you may sit down," said the president, shortly.

And then began the long file of witnesses for the defense. As all these poor people, the victims of cruel violence or of hateful vexations on the part of the Count, completed the simple recital of their wrongs, you could see the prosecuting attorney's nose sink deeper into his papers, where he pretended to be hunting for something; while the president tapped softly and impatiently on his desk with a paper knife. As for the jury, they were visibly impressed in our favor by this hearing. The appearance of the Chevalier de Galibert was also a great success, first, because he excited curiosity—for in the towns they had forgotten these old costumes of the nobles of the *ancien régime* such as he wore. Then, his testimony concerning me was so very favorable that the public, interested in us, murmured approval.

When he had finished, M. Vidal-Fongrave rose:

"M. le president, I wish to ask M. le Chevalier de Galibert his opinion of M. le Comte de Nansac."

This question seemed futile to me. . . . But already the Chevalier was answering quickly:

"I feel no hesitation in explaining myself on this point. An old proverb says,—'You celebrate carnival time with your wife, Easter with your curé;' and I will add, 'Sunday with the Comte de Nansac.' Who follows him is pursued by trouble."

Although it was rather lugged in by the hair, it caused laughter and a good deal of noise in the court, in spite of the quick admonitions of the president. Then, as the hour was late, the case was put off until the next day for the prosecutor's speech, and for the speech of M. Fongrave, who was defending us all.

The next day we learned that in Paris the people had overcome the Swiss and the Royal Guards, and that Charles X was in flight. This news rather put the officers of justice out of countenance; for they had expected something quite different. It did not, however, prevent the prosecutor from bitterly demanding my head. He was not at all the sort of man who rises above men and things, who weighs circumstances, scrutinizes motives, takes account of events, and demands the punishment which seems fair and just to his own conscience. No; his business was to have me guillotined, and he did all in his power to bring it about. He assured them all that crime was in my blood; witness that ancestor of mine, hanged long ago,

for revolt and arson to whom I owed the offensive nickname of Croquant. From him he passed on to my grandfather, imprisoned on the eve of the Revolution for having burned the château of Reignac; then he came to my father, the murderer of Laborie, who had died in the convict-ship and finally, reaching me, he said I had surpassed my ancestors in precocious wickedness, since before burning l'Herm, I had burned the Count's forest, when I was only eight years old. At last, after assuring them that hatred of the rich had been the only motive back of my crime, he passed on to the other accused men. He did not deny that for them there were extenuating circumstances, and he would be contented with their condemnation to the galleys for life. But as for me, who had conceived, plotted and executed the crime, as was shown from my own confession, my head must fall. And as he said this, he seemed, with a gesture of his lean hand, to be cutting it off himself.

To all this I listened with a wandering mind, and without being very greatly moved. My thoughts were elsewhere. Once more I saw my poor father seated on this very bench where I was sitting; and my mother, dying in her wretched sickbed in all the agony of despair. I thought of my dear Lina lying at the bottom of the unfathomable Gour. And as I gave myself over to these melancholy thoughts, I told myself that since I had now avenged those I loved, my task was done. Death had no terrors for me. . . .

"Maitre Fongrave, you have the floor," said the president.

Then our counsel rose to his feet, placed his cap before him and in a grave deep voice began his plea, which was reproduced entirely the next day in the *Echo de Vésone* newspaper.

"Gentlemen of the Jury:

"It seems to me that I glimpse across the centuries some traces of the unconscious justice of things. It is not, certainly, that high and serene justice to which humanity aspires, but a sort of avenging law of retaliation which causes oppression to engender hatred, which makes tyranny incite revolt, violence provoke violence, and injustice—which is the violation of law—finally bring about justice.

"The case submitted to you is only one episode in that long succession of peasant revolts that have been brought about by cruel vexations, an unlimited insolence and the most brutal oppression.

"All the guilty ones are not on that bench at my back, gentlemen. He is absent, whose criminal actions brought on these occurrences for which the accused men are held to account; he is absent, that pretended gentleman, that haughty grandson of a villain, who used to pick up unclean gold-pieces from the gutters of the rue Quincampoix."

"Maitre Fongrave," interrupted the president, "your retrospective appreciations are pointless; you have no need to hunt out the origin of an honorable family's

fortunes. Will you confine yourself to the facts of the case? Property should be respected."

"M. le president, I subscribe heartily to that doctrine. . . . I respect the fortune that is acquired by honest and persevering labor; I respect also the property that is the visible fruit of work. But when a fortune is founded on the public ruin, when property becomes a vast swindle, I have a right as a man and a barrister to brand it and to despise it!

"I have said, gentlemen of the jury, that the chief criminal was that nobleman who appears in this century like a monstrous anachronism."

And then, taking up the testimony of the witnesses for the defense, M. Fongrave drew a fearful picture of the miseries, vexations, and cruelties endured by the peasants who were neighbors of the Count. He painted him as he was, proud, hard and wicked, oppressing the poor without pity, crushing them beneath a capricious and arbitrary tyranny, and doing it with impunity, merely for the pleasure of doing it, thanks to the culpable weakness of the authorities.

"See," he cried, "the point we have reached forty years after the declaration of the Rights of Man! And now, gentlemen, is it not remarkable that the neighbors of the Comte de Nansac should have been not merely patient but so long-suffering that they did not decide sooner to say, no?"

Then, passing on to me in particular, he gave the history of my miserable life from my earliest childhood, and related all the unhappiness caused me by the

barbarous wickedness of the Count. When he showed my father, wasted with fever, expiring on a plank-bed in the convict-ship; when he described my mother, that courageous woman, dying, maddened by the anguish of despair, I put my head in my hands for a moment and wiped my wet eyes.

And as he went on, showing how the hatred sown in my heart by the evil deeds of the Count had increased and grown stronger with age, and the resolution to avenge my unhappy parents had become for me a sort of virtue in the absence of all human justice, pity began to appear on the faces of the jury. Then, when he came to those four days I had spent in the dungeon of l'Herm, tortured by hunger and despair, destined to be devoured alive by rats, there was a shiver in the audience, followed by a dull murmur.

"How was it that this act of odious tyranny, which carries us back to the worst days of the feudal system, how was it that this abominable crime remained unpunished? How is it that this guilty man has not been seized and punished,—this man who perpetuates in this century the most criminal violence of the worst country nobles of a past age?

"Ah, you should not be astonished, gentlemen, when justice and humanity are violated and outraged like this with impunity, that a popular verdict should be formed and summarily judge the guilty. It is fortunate when, as in this case, it limits itself to material reprisals. If we consult history we see that right up

to the Revolution, which was their synthesis, all the popular uprisings, Bagaudes, Pastoureaux, Jacques, Gauthiers, Croquants . . . have been caused by the cruel tyranny of those in power. . . . ”

“Come to the point, Maître Fongrave,” said the president, who from the beginning of this plea had been moving feverishly in his seat.

“I have reached it, M. le president. My point is the flood of the popular movement which in these three days of tempest has submerged the throne of Charles X, at this moment on the road to exile. . . . ”

At this reply, given in a loud voice, applause burst from the audience, in spite of the president’s threats. After silence had been re-established, M. Fongrave continued:

“Gentlemen, I will close. Like all those rebels—I could count many more—like all those nameless men of history who have themselves tried in vain for centuries to raise the burden that was crushing them, or, to speak more truly, the tombstone that covered them,—I say, just as all these unfortunate men have been absolved by posterity, so ought these men present to be acquitted by you. What they have done, their ancestors did also. Driven to extremities by insolent brutality, gratuitous cruelty, and by the humiliating violation of their dignity as men, they have revolted. Since the law did not exist for them, since those who ought to protect them against such arbitrary annoyances, such nameless acts of violence, have abandoned them, since they have been excluded, so to speak, from

law and justice, I say it quite frankly, they are excusable,—I should almost say, innocent. They, poor souls, timid and oppressed, have wished to be reinstated in their natural rights, and from beasts, so to speak, to become men. Who would dare to condemn them? Certainly not in the land of La Boétie will there be found twelve citizens who will so insult humanity.

“Gentlemen of the jury, I place the fate of these accused men in your hands with confidence, certain that at this moment when the people at the capital have driven away those who wished to confiscate all our liberties, you will return them to their families. Ferral and his companions have done on a small scale what the Parisians have done on a large one; in default of the law, they have called force to the service of justice. Acquit them, gentlemen. The Revolution, triumphant at Paris, cannot be condemned here. Acquit them, and you will crown the desires of your fellow-citizens who will bless you for having passed judgment not as cold jurists, but as men of heart whom nothing that concerns humanity can leave indifferent.”

And M. Fongrave sat down amid cheers.

The public prosecutor was so confounded by the effect of this plea, which was clearly shown in the faces of the jury, that he judged it useless to reply. As for the president, he tried in vain, in his summing up, to efface the impression by elaborating the prosecutor's arguments, and making light of those of our counsel. But nothing came of it. After half an hour

of deliberation, the jury returned with a verdict of acquittal for all the accused.

When we went out, we found quite a crowd awaiting us, curious to see us nearby, such silly idlers are the city folk. I believe I have already said this, but then one has occasion to say it often. When I saw all these curious souls, elbowing each other and saying: "There they are! There they are!" I thought to myself,—“There would have been even more of you if they were going to cut our throats!” But I said nothing, so as not to spoil the joy of the rest, who had been afraid of never seeing their homes again.

We all found lodgings in that little inn in the rue de la Miséricorde where we had stayed, my mother and I, during my father's trial. There were not enough beds for all, but at that time it was the usual thing on journeys, especially among poor people, to sleep two or three together; which we did. The next morning we all went together to thank M. Fongrave, and to ask him how much we owed him.

“Oh!” he exclaimed, knowing well that we were poor, “it is nothing, my friends. I am sufficiently paid for my trouble by the pleasure of having helped to extricate you from a bad situation. Go back to your homes in peace.”

And after we had all shaken hands with him, and repeated our thanks, assuring him of our gratitude, we left him

Perhaps I ought not to mention it, but indeed it was not to ungrateful people that he had done a service;

for as long as he lived we all showed him that we had not forgotten his goodness. It would be a pair of chickens or capons from one, or a basket of fine fruit, or a pot of honey, or some pigeons; others would carry him a kid, a lamb, a *piot*, otherwise called a turkey. I myself always paid him an annual fee of a hare, which I sent him by Gibert, the grocer of Thenon, who went every year to the King's fair to make his purchases: not counting several woodcocks, when I had the opportunity.

Having said farewell to M. Fongrave, and passed down the Place du Greffe, we crossed the Pont-Vieux, Barris, and there we were on the highroad to Lyons, setting off for the Barade forest, which we reached just at sunset, all of us very happy to see it again.

CHAPTER VIII

WHEN the first moment of joy at finding myself free had passed, I fell into a deep melancholy as I thought of my poor Lina. As long as my life had been in question, I had let myself be somewhat distracted from her memory by my own danger. Man is made like this, and 'I am sure that many better men than I would have acted the same way. But now that the affair was over, this memory came back, bitter and painful, like the smarting of an old wound.

Sometimes on Sundays I would go to Bars to find Bertrille, to have the consolation of talking about my dead sweetheart. She was very obliging, the good girl, and talked about her for long hours, telling me all those little secrets that girls confide to each other about their lovers. Although in one way it increased my pain to learn, from what Bertrille told me, how much poor Lina loved me, I was very happy all the same to hear it, and I never grew weary of questioning her about it.

At other times, my heart nearly bursting, I would go to the Gour and lying there under the shadow of the trees, I would think long about Lina. I would recall in all its details our innocent love, and I would call up to memory a glance, a smile, a loving word. I seemed to see us walking together in some deeply-

hollowed, unfrequented road, holding hands, our heads lowered, silent, except now and then for a few words which showed our love, and made us raise our heads to look deeper into each other's eyes.

And when I had exhausted my happy memories, I would think of the martyrdoms that the poor girl had suffered in her home, and anger would blaze up in me. I would imagine her running to Maurezies to ask me to help her against her wretched mother and, full of despair when she learned of my disappearance, coming to drown herself in the Gour. I saw the very spot where they had found her sabots, and in my grief, I hid my face in the grass and cried aloud like a wild animal.

Now everything was ended; she was at the bottom of this abyss, lying in some corner of those grottoes in the subterranean waters, and that charming body, losing all human form, was falling into decomposition, to leave on the fine sands only a skeleton, destined perhaps, some thousands of years later, after some cataclysm, to establish the new system of a future scholar.

Oh! her mother, that old Mathive who had driven her to despair! How I hated her! Fortunately her fine Guilhem was seeing to it that she suffered as she had made Lina suffer. It was only two or three months after Lina was no more, and when Géral had been dead a year, that these two scoundrels married. The blackguard had forced the silly old woman to give him all her property in the marriage contract,

and now that he was the master he showed it, by God! Work was not for him! He went about everywhere to the markets, the fairs, the merrymakings, drinking, playing cards, going off on sprees with the pretty street-singers, and only came home to rest. Then, if she tried to complain, he would treat her like the commonest street-walker, use her roughly, and finally beat her. And after she had been well shaken up, like a pea in a pot, when night came and the man had drunk and eaten heavily, this woman who still whinnied around this robust male would make up to him, and would have been willing, so to speak, to embrace his feet. But he would drive her to the door with kicks: "Off to your straw, old dog!" and then he would pull the bolt. Oh, the punishment of this wicked mother was well on its way!

During the week I was necessarily somewhat distracted from my sorrow by work, but from time to time the memory of my poor Lina would come to me suddenly like the stab of a knife. It was quite necessary for me to earn some money, for the little that old Jean had laid by would not have supported us both. But if he had had a hundred times as much, I would not have wished to live as a shirker at his expense. So I had taken up my usual way of living, cultivating his property, working out by the day here and there, and selling a few hares or a couple of partridges on Tuesdays at Thenon. Then when winter came, I took a job of wood-cutting in a part of the forest over towards Las Motras. This was the occupa-

tion that suited me best, for I was quite alone. In the morning I would set out, carrying in my haversack a piece of black bread with a small goat's cheese, hard as a stone, an onion and a pint of a beverage I had made from herbs. I would walk down the paths, slow as a mule, breaking the ice under my sabots, or bringing the powdery snow down over me from the big gorse or the tall bracken, when I crossed the thickets to make a short cut. The whole day long, alone in the forest, I would cut wood. Stopping at times in moments of recollection and leaning on my ax, I would stare fixedly ahead of me, my eyes fastened on the somber woods, as if Lina might come out of them. Then, regaining control of myself, I would spit on my hands and take up my chopping again. But man is man: when the death of the girl whom he has expected to cherish all his life long and to love to his last day has torn out half of his heart, he honestly believes he will not survive the loss, he believes that her disappearance is an irreparable misfortune which affects not only himself but the entire world. In the long run, however, seeing that things follow their natural course, that after winter the sun, rising higher in the heavens, floods the earth with warmth and light, and that all about him life flows from the fertile soil; that the birds make their nests, that lovers seek each other; he submits to the influence of his surroundings; he, like nature, finds a new life stirring within him. Little by little the grief is softened; the memory grows dim, and the dear image

which he believed imperishable, which in the early days appeared as bright as a newly-minted coin, becomes less distinct, like the effigy on an old gold piece that has been worn by usage.

Thus it was with me. With time my life grew less bitter, and my sorrow lighter to bear. With time, in place of a sharp grief filled with revolt, I felt myself slipping into a resigned sadness. Not that I ever forgot her who was my first and sweetest love, but if her memory was always dear, it was also no longer so constantly painful.

Since the burning of the Château de l'Herm, I had risen a great deal in the estimation of the neighboring peasants. At the Thenon markets and the Rouffignac fairs, everywhere I found plenty of people who invited me to have a drink if I had wished one. But I did not often accept, an attitude that sometimes caused me to be put down as proud; but they were mistaken. For that matter, I had no reason at all to be proud, since I was doubtless the humblest of all those around me. But, thanks to the Curé Bonal, I had other ideas and other tastes. When I consented to touch glasses with them, it was because there was some service I could render them. As I was the only peasant in the district who could read and write, they would come to me to write a letter to some son who had gone into military service, or to draw up an account of day labor, or to regulate the affairs of some farmer when he left a farm, instead of going to find the scribe in Thenon or a notary. And when I went

through the villages, everywhere they invited me in to have a drink. There were even girls of property who let me understand that they would be glad to have me for a sweetheart. Some of them were fresh, pretty, and even attractive girls, but they were not my poor Lina. What made me most welcome to the people, however, was that I had taken up their defense, rid them of the Count, and abolished that den of thieves. Now they were left in peace, no longer afraid of seeing their wheat trampled by the horses' hoofs, or their ripe grapes eaten by the hunting dogs. They walked the woods, certain from now on that they would not be lashed with a whip because they had not gotten out of the way quickly enough. And they went to fairs as to their work in the fields, confident that their wives and daughters would no longer be insulted by the insolent young people.

For, since the burning of the château, the Count had disappeared, and all his family with him. No one knew quite where he had gone. The oldest of the four daughters who had been with him had followed Dom Enjalbert as housekeeper when he was appointed curé over by Carlux. The second had been placed as companion in a great family, into which she soon brought dissension. The third, the sharpest of them all, had gone to Paris to join her eldest sister who had gone to the bad long before. As for the youngest, the one I had carried out of the château when it was set on fire, she had established herself not far from l'Herm on a little farm which had been

part of her dead mother's dowry, and which the creditors had not been able to have sold, like the rest of the estate. She lived there with the farmer's wife, who had been her wet-nurse, sleeping in a little room on a poor bed, eating soup and black bread and chestnuts like the others. In the daytime she would roam the woods, her gun under her arm, and accompanied by her dog. With her air of a wild filly, she was the only one of the family who was worth anything. Like the others, she too was very proud, but while her sisters took a false pride in continuing to lead a life of dissipation even at the expense of their liberty or their honor, she preferred the hard existence of a peasant to this life of subjection or licentiousness. The others were so light-headed that they had not understood this, so that when Galiote had announced her intention, they had made great fun of her:

"Then you will become a real little peasant girl!"

"You will lack nothing but a spindle!"

"And you will marry Jacquou! . . . "

"You will marry Jacquou!"—this mocking jest was told me in a burst of laughter by Galiote's foster-sister. I remembered the emotion I had felt on carrying her out of the château, and it left me thoughtful. Certainly I believe that any youth of my age, vigorous and healthy as I was, would have been troubled as I had been to feel this beautiful girl's body moving and turning in his arms. So I was not surprised at that. But how was it possible that the mere memory of that moment could still stir me,—I who had never

looked at any other woman than Lina? All day I tried to drive this scene from my memory, steeping myself in the recollections of my dear, dead love; but it was useless. From time to time she would come back into my mind, as tenacious as a bramble on which one is caught.

"May the devil fly away with that Francette, for having told me that nonsense!" I thought many times.

And from that day forward it was impossible for me to free myself from the disturbing memory of that episode; so that it seemed as if, to my great vexation, some devil had come to life in me.

While I was in this state of mind, out of sorts with myself because of what seemed to me a treachery to my dead parents and an affront to Lina's memory, old Jean happened to die, after four days of illness; and I found myself alone. His nephew, who was a charcoal-burner like himself, came to live in the house with his wife and five children, very happy over this windfall. He was not a bad man, but he was so very poor that this inheritance seemed to him like a fortune; and he and his family were at once consoled for the death of Uncle Jean.

In my opinion, one of the most regrettable things about extreme poverty is that in this way it stifles natural sentiment among relatives. The man who, without being rich, is not hard pressed by need, can, without too severe an effort, put family affection before the advantage of an inheritance. But with poor fellows who, like Jean's nephew, slave the year round

and can hardly secure enough bread for their children, it would be hard if the joy at seeing them a little relieved from poverty should not make them forget the death of their relatives. It is one of the things with which we peasants are most often reproached, but every day we see gentlefolk who lack nothing act the same way, although they are much less excusable. As for me, I deeply regretted old Jean, who had been kind to me; and I helped carry him to the cemetery. Then I set about leaving my abode.

In getting together my things, I came across Galiote's little dagger, and this recalled to my mind things I had somewhat forgotten since Jean had been ill. For one moment I was on the point of throwing it to the devil, but instead I put it in the bottom of my haversack.

It did not take me long to make up my bundle. I had two shirts, one of which I was wearing; a pair of trousers; a worn jacket and a blouse; a cap of fox-skin; a pair of shoes and some sabots. In addition I had a little book about a slave in ancient Rome, which the dead Curé Bonal had given me, and my gun, which had been found in a hut, hidden under some leaves. That was all I owned. In Lina's time I had been anxious to dress better, so as to do her honor; but now it mattered little to me.

When my little bundle was made up, I whistled to my dog and went off, leaving the key with a neighbor to be given to Jean's new nephew, who had gone to get some of his furniture. I had left deliberately,

but when I had gone a little distance I stopped, wondering where I should go. As I have said, there were many people who seemed glad to see me, and I would doubtless have found a job somewhere. But, although the condition of farm laborers among the peasants, where you worked and ate with them, had nothing unpleasant about it, still I loved my liberty too well to hire myself out. Perhaps if I had taken such a position I could have married, like Jacob, without serving seven years.

There was a peasant girl at Bessedes who looked on me with favor. Her mother, who was a widow, had need of a son-in-law to cultivate their farm, and since I had several times worked there by the day, both women had given me to understand that I would suit them for a son-in-law and a husband. But I desired neither the girl nor the property, although the whole thing was worth something. So I received the friendly words of the daughter and the advances of the mother with coldness.

No; there was no longer any question of that. But where should I go? By dint of much thinking, I remembered an old building situated between Las Saurias and Cros-de-Mortier, which had formerly served as a temporary shelter for the forest wardens of the nobles, but which had been abandoned for several years. Its last lodger had been a brigand who had settled himself and lived there for some time, until the moment when he had been caught and sent to the galleys for the rest of his days. This hovel,

called *Aux Ages*, and the woods about it, belonged to a land-owner of Bonneval, whom I went to see on the spot. As he was a good man, we came to an agreement at once. It was settled that I should lodge there free of charge, on consideration that every year, at the festival of the patron saint of Fossemagne, which fell on the 21st of October, I should carry him a hare and two partridges as rent. The matter settled, I went straight to the hut. To tell the truth, Jean's house was rich and substantial in comparison with this one, and I began to laugh as I repeated a saying of the Chevalier:—"That would be a fine house if it had some sparrow-pots!"

There was nothing but four walls and the tiled roof, in bad condition. The hearth was crudely built of rough stones. The only opening was a low door which closed with a latch. The floor was bare earth, now grassgrown, since the place was uninhabited. The first night I slept on bracken which I heaped up in a corner, but the next day, having secured some planks and pegs, I made a sort of bed, like a great chest, and put up a similar sort of table. Two squared stumps at either end of a tree trunk served me as a bench; and there I was among my belongings, as they say. After that, I had to buy a pot, a wooden bucket, a soup dish, and a spoon. Fortunately, at the time of Jean's death, I had collected a few sous, which now were of good service to me.

The spot was very wild, but by no means displeasing to me, though I imagine a person from Périgueux

would not easily have grown accustomed to it. About the house there were five or six large chestnut trees that gave shade, and under them grew a little grass, short and thick as velvet; out of the grass grew here and there ferns, or clusters of that flower which is called golden button, or, in patois, *paoutoloubo*, because the leaves resemble the print of a wolf's foot. Close to the house was a little garden, with crumbling walls, full of wild grasses, brambles, bushes and wild roses that had entirely smothered a prune tree, on which was growing a wild clematis, often called the "beggars' plant," because tramps who whine piteously at the town gates or at fairs use the leaves of the juice to manufacture those artificial wounds which they display to the eyes of the passersby.

Forty paces beyond the chestnut trees were the coppice woods, dense and vigorous, surrounding the house on all sides, so that you reached it by a little path already nearly swallowed up by the heather, which stopped at the house. At the bottom of a little valley three hundred feet away, was a well which resembled the one at the tile-works. The water was not very good, but you had to make the best of it. Good wells are rare on some of the high plateaus of Périgord. Ever since the time of the Druids abundant springs have been objects of great veneration in our country. There are many people who go to them from a great distance, in the early autumn, to drink the healthful waters. To certain ones the women come to place an egg on the stones and ensure good luck for the

hatching. In others the girls throw pins in order to get a husband; and as they all want to be married, there were some springs where you could see thousands of pins at the bottom of the water. In certain districts, where there are no springs, the wells are revered in the same way; and on Christmas day the daughter of the house would drop a bit of bread into it, so that the water would not dry up.

What pleased me about this Ages house was that it was all alone in the midst of the forest, quite a distance from the villages; and there was no danger of any dispute with the neighbors. This lonely place accorded well with my sad thoughts, and the lonely life I had to lead there suited my tastes. Besides, I loved the forest, in spite of its bad reputation. I loved those immense masses of woods that followed the rises of the ground, covering the land with a green mantle in summer, and in autumn turning all colors, according to the species of the trees, yellows, pale greens, russets, browns, pricked by the bright red of the wild cherry trees, or the dark green of some scattered clumps of pine. I also loved those grassy valleys, brushed by the snouts of the wild boars; those rocky plateaus strewn with pink heather and broom and golden flowering gorse; those vast stretches of tall heather where the hunted animal would take refuge; those little clearings on the top of a ridge where the thin soil would be thick with lavender, thyme, everlasting, wild thyme, sweet marjoram, whose perfume rose to my nostrils as I went by with my gun on my shoulder,

doubtless rather badly dressed, but free and proud, like the savage I was.

For all that, I had to leave it, when I went out to work in the neighborhood, but I always came back to it with pleasure. In the evening, when the day's work was over and I had had supper, I would return to Ages, walking slowly through the woods, followed by my dog. I was delighted to be alone, free from the subjection of hired work and from tiresome chattering; and I would commune alone with my memories.

In leaving Maurezies I had expected, I do not know why, to leave behind me the tormenting thought of Galiote; but it was no use! When I closed my eyes, I seemed to see her still in the court of the château, her hair loosened, her shoulders bare, her nostrils quivering, throwing me a steely glance. And I still seemed to feel her in my arms, unconsciously revealing to me, as she struggled, her beautiful body, and furious at receiving on her forehead my drops of blood.

Ah! it was no longer the gentle and profound feeling that attached me to Lina, this tenderness of heart that made me see only her in the whole world; but a furious appetite for the superb flesh of this creature. I did not love her; I hated her, rather; and nevertheless I was dragged towards her, and I raged with desire for her.

I revolted against this passion, I accused myself of baseness in thus mingling a vitiating desire with the

hatred which I had vowed towards the cursed race of Nansacs. But in spite of everything, I could not succeed in driving from my mind this vision which haunted it.

Although I was powerless to thrust off this humiliating obsession I felt myself still master of my will, and that reassured me. But soon I had a terrible shock. One Sunday as I was hunting in the forest between Les Foucaudies and Lac-Nègre, while my dog followed the trail of a hare, at the crossing of two paths in the coppice wood I met Galiote. She was walking briskly, followed by her dog, with her gun on her shoulder, her air jaunty, her look assured. She wore a duck skirt, closely fitting linen gaiters, a long, loose gathered blouse of striped cotton with a loose belt, and a hat of gray felt in which she had stuck a jay's feather. The large strap of the gamesack, passing between her small breasts, showed them firm and free under the light stuff. I stopped short on seeing her, as if suffocated with a burning sensation, and when she passed, with her cheeks pink, her eyes bright, and a sprig of sweet marjoram between her red lips, I felt my temples hammering.

She passed proudly, throwing me a disdainful glance, and I stood there looking quite foolish, without finding one word to say, watching her go on with her light and swinging step.

This meeting made my situation worse. I was like a man with a thorn deep in his flesh, which at each movement pricks him painfully. Everything recalled

Galiote to me—a screaming jay, flying off at my approach, made me think of the feather in her hat; the odor of sweet marjoram recalled the sprig she had had in her mouth; in the paths over the damp earth I would find the prints of her little feet; finally, silence and solitude, everything spoke to me of her, not to mention the boiling blood of my youth. In spite of this, I still resisted, and I even had the strength of mind not to hunt in the neighborhood of l'Herm, so as not to meet her again. But when the devil takes a hand in things, as they say, you are caught in unexpected quarters.

One Tuesday, at vesper time, I was coming back from Thenon where I had been to sell a hare and a couple of rabbits, and was walking quickly, for the weather was threatening. The air was heavy and stifling; the wild broom bushes, warmed by the sun, were sending out their strong perfume; peals of thunder were following each other between long flashes of lightning that rent the sky. A burning wind drove along the black clouds, touched with red, bent the coppice wood, and made the tall tree-tops sway in the air. The frightened birds were coming back from foraging in the fields to take shelter in the woods. Flies, terrible as famished fleas, were sticking to my face, and about me whirled the enraged gadflies.

I shall never get there in time, I thought, looking at the sky. And indeed about four hundred yards from Ages great drops began to fall, flattening themselves out in the dust of the path, from which rose

that stale odor which comes from the earth in time of storm. And then the rain fell heavy and straight, like water poured from a pitcher; so that when I reached the house, I was entirely drenched.

When I had taken off my blouse, I put on my old jacket, and flung on the hearth-stones an armful of branches which I fanned quickly into flame. While I was there drying my legs, my dog, who was watching the fire, turned about and began to growl and then to bark. At the same time the door opened suddenly, and I saw Galiote.

The sight was like a blow in the stomach, but she was no less surprised than I. On seeing me, she stopped short on the doorstep. "Come in, come in without fear," I said, getting up; "come and dry yourself."

She closed the door and came up to the hearth.

"I'm not in the least afraid," she said bravely.

"And you're right. Come, sit there, and turn towards the fire."

And as I said this, I pushed one of the stumps, which served as a seat, into the center before the fire.

She put her gun in the chimney corner, took off her gamebag, set it on the table, and sat down, turning her back to the flame. During this time my dog was sniffing her dog and making it welcome.

I should not confess it, but, although I put on a bold air, my heart was beating violently at the sight of her there. Her wet blouse clung to her body, and revealed her beautiful figure. She soon began to be

enveloped in a light mist of steam. In order to hide my disturbance, I went out to find an armful of dry wood which I flung on the fire. After that there was a moment of silence, while in the dark cabin, as full of steam as a room where chestnuts are drying, there spread around the fragrant odor of burning juniper.

"You don't often visit these parts?" I said to her, to break the embarrassing silence.

"This is the first time. I lost my way following a wounded hare."

"It's fortunate I arrived from Thenon in time. You would have caught cold if you had stayed drenched like that."

"Oh!" she said simply, shrugging her shoulders a little.

I wanted to keep silence, but was unable to.

"Your hat is dripping all over you. You had better take it off and dry it."

She took off her hat and looked about for a place to lay it. But there were no andirons or anything else suitable.

"Give it to me; I'll hold it."

And I took it from her, rather against her will, eager to touch something that was intimately hers.

When her hat was off, her heavy, golden hair, gathered at her neck, glowed with the reflections of the firelight, illuminating the somber dwelling. She was looking at the miserable furniture, the plank-bed, filled with bracken, with its wretched coverlet, at the

table with its four stakes driven into the earth, under which was a rusty pot that served as a complete kitchen outfit.

"Then you live here?" she said, not wishing to appear silent.

"Oh, yes; and you see there's not too much in it. I sleep in my sheath like the King's sword."

She nodded her head as if in approval.

There was a moment of silence, during which were to be heard drops of rain coming through some hole in the roof and falling with a dull, regular noise on the beaten earth, like the click of a pendulum marking the seconds. From the corner of the fireplace where I was, I could watch her without her seeing me, and I admired the golden locks which curled at her neck, and her pretty little ear which wore no earring. But feeling that her back was dry, she turned toward the hearth, stretching out towards the fire her little nailed shoes, and holding her damp hands up to the flame with a slight shiver of pleasure.

Then I tried to look at her without seeming to do so. She raised her blouse, which clung to her chest and arms, and looked at her steaming gaiters. Ah, what a beautiful creature! And what a strong, healthy charm rose from this superb young body, unspoiled by feminine fripperies. Mad ideas went through my head when I saw her there quite close to me, at my mercy, so to speak. From her hat, which I was holding, emanated the lovely aroma of her flesh. I was as if

intoxicated, and I felt my reason deserting me. Then I made an effort to control myself, and went out to escape temptation, leaving her there to finish drying herself at her ease. The storm had passed; only a few far-off rumblings of thunder were to be heard. A pleasant coolness had followed the previous stifling heat. About the house the shining leaves of the chestnut trees were letting fall drops of water that set trembling the ferns growing in their shade.

I went a little distance away, walking slowly in the poor path, strewn with puddles. Everything in the woods seemed refreshed; the grass was greener, the blossoms of the broom yellower, those of the heather a deeper pink, while the wild scabieuses, heavy with water, bent their heads on their slender stalks, and the stiff leaves of the dwarf holly fairly glittered. The sun was sinking behind the horizon, and sending through the woods its last rays, which turned into diamonds the drops that trembled on the tiny spikes of the wild oats. A fresh, woody odor came from the wet earth, where the wild plants grew profusely, wild thyme, sage, sweet marjoram, and the subtly fragrant yellow Saint Roch's plant. I walked about for a moment, bare-headed, breathing eagerly the pure, fresh air, and revolving in my head all sorts of contradictory thoughts, like the feeling that agitated me. The Ave Maria was ringing from the belfry of Fosse-magne, its sonorous vibrations spreading through the twilight with a melancholy harmony. Little by little,

I felt the peacefulness of the day's end steal over me, and before long the fresh coolness about me had calmed me, and I went back to the house.

Before the hearth, which shone at the back of the dwelling, Galiote was standing.

"Is it late?" she asked.

"Night is coming," I answered.

"Then I'll start on," she said, taking her gun.

"I'll set you on your path; you might lose yourself in these woods." And I went out after her.

We walked on in silence, as I thought of this beautiful creature, no longer with the burning desire I had just felt, but with the strong resolve to remember that there were unforgettable things between us. She was thinking of I don't know what. After walking for half an hour and reaching the ill-famed highway from Angouleme to Sarlat, we followed it for a moment until we were a little to the right of the village of Puy; then, entering the coppice, we crossed the forest of l'Herm. We followed narrow paths that were sometimes scarcely marked, and sometimes entirely lost. I walked in front of Galiote, pushing aside a branch of a wild rose, warning her of a puddle of water; and when a young tree, bent by the storm, barred the path, I would lift it to let her pass. At the end of three-quarters of an hour, the path emerged from the woods into a field where we could see the windows of the farm in which she lived, shining faintly in the night.

"Now you're home again."

"Thank you, Jacques," she said in a clear voice, and, looking at me intently, "thank you!"

I looked at her a moment, enveloping the whole of her in a burning glance, and was on the point of saying,—“I wish I might have saved your life!” but I restrained myself to a mere: “Good-bye, mademoiselle!”

And as she went off, I turned back into the woods.

On my return I went by way of the *Jarry de las Fadas*, and when I was on the top of the hill I sat down at the foot of the tree. The moon was rising on the horizon, red as blood, and was climbing slowly and sinisterly in the black sky. I stared fixedly at it for a long time, thinking of Galiote, and reproaching myself for not having been more steadfast. I was full of remorse for having stifled in her presence the hatred I felt for her and her family. I had done this in spite of myself, for the unexpected sight of her had so startled me as to make me for a moment forget everything. Now I tried to find excuses for myself; how could I have acted differently? Should I have driven her out of my hut in weather not fit for a dog? No, that was not possible. And, somewhat quieted by these reflections, I fed on her image which still appeared before my eyes.

Certainly her last glance, as she left me, had no longer been that evil look, sharp as a sword, which she had flung at me in the court of the château on the night of the fire. The scornful hatred which at that time overflowed from her entire person had disap-

peared. I understood then, that my manner towards her this evening had brought about this change; but it seemed to me, when I recalled her words, her manner, the expression of her face, that she had shown something more than gratitude for a service rendered. In my folly I said to myself: "This girl, proud and rebellious against love, whom the examples of her sisters and the young fools who used to frequent l'Herm have not been able to spoil,—was she touched by the burning passion that flamed visibly in me, even while I tried to conceal it?" Certainly, if it had not been for my miserable station in life, I should not have been greatly astonished. At this period I was a strong and handsome young fellow, well fitted to turn the head of one of those great ladies of whom I had heard, who chose their lovers from an inferior station of life so as to dominate them the better. But in spite of the passion that drove me towards Galiote, I revolted from the thought of playing this rôle of the despised lover. To her pride, as a daughter of the nobility, I opposed my pride as a man, and in spite of her spirited, passionate nature, I felt in myself the power to conquer it and impose on it my masculine supremacy.

While I was occupied with these thoughts, agitated and uncertain of the real feelings of Galiote, my dog, which had been curled up at my feet, raised his head and gave a low growl. I put my ear to the ground and heard the steps of men coming towards me. At once I grabbed my dog by the skin of his neck and

dragged him behind the big oak where I hid, crouching against the tree. About ten minutes later three men arrived from the top of the ridge. They were dressed in brown jackets, and wore large drooping hats; their handkerchiefs, knotted below their eyes, served as masks; and they each carried a large stick of the sort we call, in patois, *billous*. I watched them pass, while I held my dog's muzzle with my hand, for fear he should bark. But it was very dark, and, dressed as they were, I did not recognize them.

But it was not difficult to see that they were robbers coming back from some crime, or going out to one, the sort of men who would kill a shopkeeper for a comb.

I stayed there an hour longer; then I went back towards Ages, still thinking of Galiote, walking slowly, like one who is in no hurry to go to bed, because he knows that he will not sleep. I was within a gunshot of the house when all at once, far away in the direction of the deserted crossroads of the Bordeaux-Brives road and the Angoulême-Sarlat highway, I heard a loud cry for help rising in the night: "Help!" suddenly cut off, as if the man had been suddenly seized by the throat or struck down at a single blow. The hair rose on my head. "It's some poor fellow being murdered," I thought, and I set off running in that direction. When I reached the crossroads quite out of breath and covered with perspiration, I saw nothing. I followed the road as far as the cross of l'Orme crying, "Ho! Ho!" to show I was coming, if it was not

too late. Then I climbed up the other side towards Jarripigier, still calling from time to time; but I saw and heard nothing. So, after I had looked and hunted around for about three-quarters of an hour, I went back to Ages and flung myself on the fern, where I tried to sleep. But this terrible cry of anguish with the passion that was troubling my soul kept me from closing an eye. "Perhaps," I thought to myself, "it was some poor devil going to a neighboring fair whom these scoundrels have murdered and then flung into the Gour!"

In those days there were a great many unpunished crimes. Merchants, coming from a distance, or peddlers going from one fair to another, with their silver in their leathern belts, disappeared without anyone's taking any notice of it. Only a long time afterwards did the people of their district begin to be anxious, seeing that they did not return. It was very difficult, then, for their relatives who lived at a distance to know just where, how and when they had disappeared. It would have been as easy to hunt for a needle in a haystack. It was all the more difficult because the brigands would cause their victims to disappear forever in places like the abyss of the Gour, or the hole of Pomeissac near Bugue, into which so many persons had been thrown, after being murdered on the nearby highway, that the authorities had been obliged to fill it up. . . .

But to pass on from these crimes of brigandage. I remained for some time foolishly torn between a

desire to see Galiote again and my conscience which forbade it. I was worried and exhausted by the conflict, and I sometimes told myself that it would be better for me if I were at the bottom of one of those abysses from which one does not return. "Ah!" I said to myself, "if I were lying for good and all by the side of my Lina's bones, everything would be over. What can I expect from life but wretched poverty, and broken-hearted regrets?" For it was in vain that I was drawn towards that devil's daughter, that I hungered for her like a madman, I kept none the less the pure and very dear memory of my first love, which the force of my present passion could indeed obscure in moments of madness, but could not efface.

Fortunately these hours of discouragement were rare; I would be ashamed later, remembering the lessons of the Curé Bonal, who had told me often that man should bear his troubles bravely and that fortitude was half of virtue. I did not try to see again the girl who had seemed to bewitch me, but all the same I met her occasionally. With a little vanity I might have believed that these encounters did not displease her. We would exchange a few words as we passed, and at times she would stop for longer talks.

I would point out to her a hare in his lair, or a flock of partridges, and that would please her. She had quite got over her former scornful manner, and seeing that after all I was neither stupid nor entirely ignorant, she began to suspect that a peasant could be a man. To tell the truth, I think that my person

pleased her, for, as I have already said, at this time of my youth I was tall and well-made: I had broad shoulders, black eyes, a robust neck, thick hair, and a short, curly black beard which shadowed my brown cheeks, for I was not able to give two sous every week to the barber at Thenon to be shaved.

When we had been talking this way for a few minutes, I would understand that this girl who until now had been cold towards men was beginning to think of love. The blood of her race spoke in her eyes when she stared at me boldly and looked me over from head to foot quite without embarrassment as she would have admired a handsome horse. I understood that perfectly, and was slightly mortified over it, but as on my side it was the boldness and beauty of the girl that tempted me, I did not pay very much attention to her manner.

At these times while I looked at her, I would be seized with a fierce desire to fling myself upon her and carry her off to the depths of a dense thicket, as a wolf carries off a lamb. It was perfectly clear to her from my shining eyes, from the stifled voice, and from my whole quivering being; but she was not otherwise disturbed by it. If I had lost control of myself, I do not know what would have happened, for she was not one of those girls who from weakness or kindness of heart abandon themselves to those they love. She was one of those savage females who defend themselves with teeth and nails from the mastery

of men even while they desire it, and to the last moment endeavor to keep the upper hand.

Thus, in these struggles between the passion that bound me and my will which got command again when I was away from Galiote's presence, the winter passed. During the bad season I had no work in the fields, but only a little wood to cut, so that in order to live I had to hunt and trap. About the forests, in the stony fields sown with junipers, I would lay snares for the thrushes, and in the thickets of blackberry vines and dogberry and wild rose bushes I would place nets for blackbirds. In the walled vineyards where there are always many burrows, I would put snares for rabbits. I used to catch foxes, martens and other ill-smelling beasts in old, abandoned buildings, and at times by moonlight; in the places where there were badger-holes I would lie in wait for the animal, which would come and rear up against a stalk of maize, forgotten in the corner of a field, expecting to find the ear.

When the weather was too bad, I stayed in the house and made mole-traps, wooden cages and whip-handles with branches of holly, baskets and flails and other little odds and ends. Thanks to all this, I did not go without bread, but all the same I ate more bread and onions than roast chicken. Although I often went several days without speaking to a living soul, I never grew weary of it, since I had early grown accustomed to being alone, and by nature I was not fond of company. And besides, in the foolish state

of mind in which I was at that time, with my head full of Galiote, I had plenty to occupy me. At times I would look at the wood-stump on which she had sat, and I seemed to see her still there, stretching out towards the fire her little feet and pink hands through which the blood showed. At other times I raised my head and looked at the door, which, it seemed to me, ought to open and let her in. The dagger which I had taken from her was stuck into a board at the head of my bed, and at times I would handle it, trying the point on one of my fingers; and the dark blue of the steel blade would bring back to me the color of her eyes.

Towards the end of the winter, one fine, sunny Sunday in March, I was seized with a terrible longing to see her again. It was nearly two months since I had met her, for the winter had been severe, the snow had lasted a long time, and it had seemed to me like ten years. I was moved by an instinctive feeling which carried me towards her as water runs downhill, as flame rises, as a plant turns towards the sun. I took my gun and wandered in the direction of the farm on which she lived, in the hope that by prowling about I could see her without being seen. But when I was near La Granval, there suddenly came to me the memory of the Curé Bonal, and with it like a shock of revolt the memories of my youth and of my parents dead in destitution and despair.

I stopped short, horrified at this destruction of my will. "Miserable fellow," I cried to myself. "Coward! Are you going to forget the hatred you have sworn against the cursed race of the Nansacs! . . . "

And in a burst of anger, changing my path, I went to the end of the avenue of chestnut trees where we had buried the poor curé. The heaped up earth had sunk down, crushing the coffin of white wood, so that the grave was scarcely visible. The grass grew thick and even in the avenue, covering everything. "One more winter," I thought, "and the rains will have entirely leveled the earth so that all trace of the grave of that brave man will have completely disappeared. His memory will still live among those who have known him, but when they are dead in their turn, no one will think of him. Profound oblivion will cover with its shadow both his memory and his grave. So goes everything in this world."

And with melancholy thoughts coming into my mind, I went slowly towards the Gour, and stayed there a long time, my eyes fastened on that stretch of water which rose from the subterranean depths where my poor Lina slept. Then I was seized with a great desire to talk of her, and I went to Bars to find Bertrille.

As I arrived, people were coming out from vespers, and I placed myself against the big oak to wait for her. But I waited for her in vain; I did not see her. When everyone had come out, I walked about for

a moment hoping to find someone I knew who could tell me about her, for I thought she still lived at Puypautier.

In the wretched village inn they were singing noisily, and I saw Mathive's famous Guilhem, "drunk as Robespierre's she-ass," as they say, I don't know why. Just as I was passing in front of a little hovel at the end of the line of houses, of which there are not many, Bertrille came out, and seeing me came towards me.

"And how goes it?" I asked her.

"Alas! my poor Jacquou! I have had many sorrows since I last saw you."

"What are they, Bertrille?"

"My mother has been seized with paralysis and can no longer leave her bed; and then my poor Arnaud died over there in Africa six months before his service was up."

"Poor Bertrille! Indeed I am sorry for you!"

And at that we began to talk together of our griefs, I speaking to her about her lover, and she to me about Lina.

In this connection she told me that that old hussy of a Mathive was utterly wretched with that scamp Guilhem, who had taken a young servant into the house, squandered half of Mathive's property, and then beaten her brutally in addition.

"And so much the better!" I cried. "I shall never be satisfied until I see her with a beggar's wallet on her back, dying by some roadside! . . . But your

mother," I went on, "is there no hope that she may get well?"

"Alas, no; all the same you can see her," she said, opening the door. And I went in after her.

What utter poverty! The two poor women were lodged in a hovel for drying chestnuts, where they had made a rough chimney like that of a hut in the woods. For furniture there was a table against the wall, with a bench, and on the other side the wretched bed in which the paralyzed woman lay. One could scarcely pass between the table and the bed, the room was so small.

"Here is Jacquou, who has come to see you, mother," said Bertrille. "You know it is he who used to live with the Curé Bonal at La Granval."

The sick woman, about whom there seemed nothing alive but her eyes, lowered her lids as if to say: "Yes, I know."

When I had tried to console her by saying that one must never despair, for without doubt the coming warm weather would cure her, she moved her eyes from right to left as a sign that she did not believe it.

After some words of comfort, I went out with Bertrille.

We went slowly along the sunken road between the thick hedges that clothed the high banks. I was troubled by a thought I dared not confess to the poor girl; I watched mechanically the dark bushes on which there still remained a few bluish sloeberries, withered by the winter, and the honeysuckle which, climbing

over the brambles and the viburnum, hung its sprays over the road. From time to time I broke a twig, without stopping, and chewed it, still silent; but finally I grew ashamed of my cowardice, and taking courage, I said:

"Poor Bertrille, excuse me . . . how do you manage to live, you who cannot go out and work by the day?"

"I spin as much as I can."

"And by this work you earn four or five sous; you have not enough to keep yourself in bread, especially this year when it is expensive."

She walked with lowered head and did not answer. Something pierced my heart like a needle.

"And perhaps," I went on, "you have none at this moment?"

Still she did not answer. Then I caught her hand:

"Look at me, Bertrille."

She raised her eyes towards mine, full of tears.

"I have thirty sous in my pocket; take them, I beg you . . . here they are!"

She hesitated a moment, but when she saw my wet eyes, she took the sous.

"Thanks, my Jacquou!"

"If the poor didn't help each other, who'd help them? I've no one in the world. I feel as if you were my sister."

She put the sous in the pocket of her apron, and we went back towards the village.

"Listen, Bertrille," I said to her before her door, "don't worry, and don't kill yourself sitting up late with your spindle to earn bread; I'm here, I'll come back Sunday."

"Oh, Jacquou! I don't want to put such a load, two women, on your shoulders."

"I'm strong enough to carry it," I answered. "Don't feel any shame about it; imagine that I'm your brother," I said, taking her hand.

She looked at me with such a rush of feeling that the shining glance of her eyes gave me a little shiver of emotion.

"Good-bye," I said, "until Sunday!"

And I went off, quite a different man from what I had come, pleased with myself, stout-hearted, ready for anything. The pleasure of having been of service to these two poor women, the resolution I had taken to assist them in their misfortune,—all that transported me. It seemed to me that from that time forth I would no longer be a person of no use to anyone; I had an aim in life, a task to fulfill which I had set for myself, and this task had something sacred about it which raised me in my own estimation; all that did me good. During the week I worked hard without losing a day, as often used to happen when I had no one to think of but myself. Then, when Sunday came I went to Bars.

At the thought of what I was going to do, I felt an inward satisfaction that had been unknown to me

before this, and I walked quickly, impatient to relieve in some way the misery of these two unfortunate creatures.

I found them still in the same situation, the mother lying on her pallet, the daughter with her spindle by her side, still spinning as if she would wear out her fingers. When I went out, after staying with them for a few moments, Bertrille went with me, and as we walked along, I gave her my week's money. At that the poor girl said to me:

"Oh, Jacquou! I could only take it from you; if it were anyone else I should die of shame."

"But from me you can take anything, just as from your own brother. I have already told you this. So accept this trifle with a free heart, as I give it to you."

Then, when she had accepted the money, she took my arm, and we walked a little way along the road without speaking.

After that, having come back to the door, we looked at one another a moment, pleased with each other, and I said to her:

"Until Sunday, my Bertrille."

"Until Sunday, then, my Jacquou."

For three months things went on like this. The joy of finding that I, humble as I was, could act as a little Providence towards Bertrille and her mother, and the feeling of responsibility which I had assumed, made a man of me and quite a different sort of one.

All the mad thoughts, all the ardent longings, all the sharp revolts of the flesh, which had formerly agitated me, were subdued by the satisfaction of having done my duty. If at rare intervals some outward circumstance would recall Galiote to me, I thought of her scarcely at all and with no disturbance of soul whatever. I was thankful to be freed from the feverish love she inspired in me, which overcame my will.

"At least," I thought, "if I must love, let it be some daughter of the Perigordian soil, a poor peasant like myself, and not a daughter of that cursed race of Nansac."

Sometimes I even met Galiote, although less often than before; but I no longer felt in her presence that boiling of the blood, that rage of savage desire which had formerly maddened me. Girls, even when like her they have had no affairs with men, recognize quite well the passions they excite; so Galiote was astonished to see me now so calm and cold beside her. When, one day, wishing to get her out of my thoughts, I gave her back her little dagger, she almost made a gesture of resentment. Perhaps she was piqued by this change, for some of the proudest women, they say, take at times a secret pleasure in the naïve admiration or crudely expressed desire of a rustic.

It seemed to me that she tried, in her own fashion, to blow upon this extinct fire in an effort to revive it; but her labor was lost. Even when I was with her I had the vision of those two poor women over there, to whom I was necessary; and I was too entirely

devoted to Bertrille to desire Galiote still. Instead of the fury of the senses, which had formerly transported me, I lived entirely in my heart, and in the presence of this superb girl my heart no longer quickened its beat.

It was not that I loved Bertrille as I had loved Lina, or that I desired her as I had desired Galiote. No; at this time I loved her only as a brother, as I have already said. I loved her because she was poor like myself, and because she was unhappy. I was grateful to her for having called to my mind the lessons of the Curé Bonal, for having reawakened in me that brotherly love which commands men to help each other in misfortune. Near her my heart was happy, but my senses were not stirred.

For that matter, as a woman she could not be compared to either one or the other. She was a strong girl of the race which springs from the soil of our region, but with none of that beauty which, except for types like Lina, needs for its development generations of leisure, an abundance of material things, and a favorable environment. Of middle height, she had none of those perfections of figure of the women of ancient days; her large hips, her robust bosom, her strong arms, proclaimed her a daughter of that people on whom weighs the heavy servitude of the soil, which for centuries and centuries has struggled and toiled, lived miserably, made its homes in hovels, but has nevertheless drawn from our stony, wholesome soil, the strength to accomplish its task, labor and genera-

tion. One could see that she was made for duty, not for pleasure.

Her face was not regular but was pleasing for all that, from its look of great goodness, and from the expression of her brown eyes, which reflected the feelings of her brave heart. Such as she was I felt that each day I was becoming more attached to her, and I rejoiced at it. It seemed very good to me now to be no longer alone in the world, to have someone I was fond of and in whom I could confide.

One Sunday when I arrived, I found the poor girl in tears. Her mother was on her deathbed. An old woman who had come in out of pity was telling her beads near the bed, on which lay the dying woman. Never have I seen anything sadder. Her face was no longer anything but bones, covered with a shining yellow skin like parchment; her half-opened mouth revealed two long black teeth in front, the only ones left; her dead and glassy eyes stared unseeingly in front of her; meager locks of white hair came out from under the cotton handkerchief on her head; her thin, bony nose showed two black holes, and through the skin that covered the dried head there was visible the image of death.

I stayed there until evening, and then went away, telling Bertrille that I would come back the next day.

When I arrived the next morning at the stroke of eight, the old mother was dead, and Bertrille was watching her, seated by a bed lighted by a rosin candle. She rose and came towards me, her eyes red.

"Poor woman," I said, "her sufferings are ended." Then I took the sprig of boxwood that lay in the dish of brown earthenware full of holy water, and sprinkled a few drops on the body.

At this moment the neighbor who was helping Bertrille came back.

"My girl, the curé wants eight francs, and you must pay in advance."

"Alas!" cried the poor girl, "I had only a three-franc piece and I gave it to Bonnetou for the coffin."

"He is a pretty heretic, your curé. But that does not surprise me," I added, remembering my poor mother's burial and his harshness.

And as Bertrille was full of despair, at having her mother buried without prayers, I said to her:

"Do not torment yourself. I will try to find the money."

And leaving hastily, I went to Ages to get the skins of a badger and two foxes which I had; and from there I went to Thenon to sell them to the merchant who usually bought them from me. By three o'clock in the afternoon I was back at Bars, having got together eight francs from the price of the skins and an advance which the merchant had made to me. The neighbor went to give the money to the curé, who then said that the burial would be at five o'clock.

So at five o'clock, with the help of three other men, I carried the coffin to the church. It was not hard work, for the poor woman was not heavy, and the church was close by.

The curé was waiting in his surplice, with his stole around his neck, and his biretta on his head. He had soon hurried through the prayers for the dead, and a quarter of an hour later we were on the way to the cemetery, the curé in front with the sexton carrying the cross and the holy water vessel, and behind the body Bertrille and a few other women.

When everything was finished, I went to the spot where my mother was buried. What can I say? It makes no difference, I suppose, whether above the six feet of earth that covers the bones of a poor creature there should be flowers or wild grasses. But we are easily affected by what we see, without listening to reason. So when I saw this corner, full of stones from the crumbling walls, full of brambles thick with donkey-cabbage, mallows and rank nettles, I stayed there a moment full of sorrow, staring fixedly at this abandoned spot from which every trace of the grave of my poor mother had disappeared. And as I went away, and passed by a tombstone broken with age, weather-worn by rain, sun and the winter frosts, crumbling, reduced to rubbish, and ready to disappear, I told myself how vain it was to try to perpetuate the memory of the dead. A stone lasts longer than a wooden cross, but time which destroys everything destroys that also. And then what does it matter to the one who is beneath? Is it not inevitable in the end that the memory of the dead should be lost in that immense and boundless sea of the millions and billions of human beings who have disappeared since

the earliest ages? To abandon the dead, therefore, to nature who covers everything with her green mantle is better than to raise those tombs where the vanity of the heirs is hidden under the pretext of honoring the dead.

The women went off with Bertrille, and I went later to bid her good-bye, and to say that I would come back the next Sunday. And indeed I did go back that Sunday and all the rest after it. I could hardly wait for the week to be over so that I could return to Bars, and it did not seem to me that I could go anywhere else.

Winter came, and then fine weather again. The grass was growing thickly on the grave of the old mother, hiding the cross of leaves which her daughter had laid above her on the day of her burial. I myself was continually drawn more and more to Bertrille. I was happy to see her and sad to leave her. Thoughts of the future were occupying me now, and I told myself often that I should like to have her for my wife so that we might spend the days of our life together.

One evening, while we were walking on the road to Fonroget, I told her so.

"Oh, Jacquou!" she answered, "why should we unite our troubles?"

"To endure them better together, since we truly love each other."

"If you wish it, then I wish it also."

And at the same time leaning against me, she lifted her eyes to mine.

I saw then in her eyes that she felt as I did. I put my arm about her waist, and we walked for a long time in silence. From the memory of our old dead loves there had sprung a new affection, serious and honest, which bound us together for life, and, feeling it, we were very happy.

"Since we are both so poor, we are perhaps doing something foolish, my poor Jacquou," she said, after a moment.

"Don't be afraid; I am strong and have enough, and I will work for us both."

"Yes, but the children. . . ."

"Don't worry about that," I said, pressing her to me.

"We must wait for the end of my mourning," she continued, after a pause.

"Yes, my Bertrille; now that I am sure of you, I will wait as long as you wish," and leaning towards her, I gave her the kiss of betrothal.

Then, taking her home, I left her, and went back very happy to Ages.

It was understood between us after that, that we should be married after Christmas, and when the time had come it was necessary to speak to the curé of Bars. Doubtless he said to himself, "Since that girl's sweetheart could find eight francs to have the mother buried, he will surely find ten to be married." And he had the impudence to ask them from Bertrille. Ah,

it was no longer the good Curé Bonal, who thought nothing of money! This other fellow only loved his sheep for their wool, and he shaved them close.

When the girl told me that, I thought for a moment to myself, and then said:

"You wait and see! Since he acts like that, we shall fool him."

Then I went off to find the curé of Fossemagne in whose parish the Ages house was, and I explained my business to him, saying, as was true, that we were both very poor, and begging him to marry us as cheaply as possible. He was a fine old man, and he began to laugh when he heard this request, and said:

"My boy, I will marry you for the lowest possible price, that is, free of charge, for the love of God."

"Thank you very much, M. le curé," I answered, laughing also. "You will not be dealing with those who are forgetful of a kindness."

As can be imagined, our wedding was not a very fine one, and people did not come to their doorsteps to see us pass. I had no relative to my knowledge, except that cousin of my father's who lived over by Cendrieux, and whose name I did not even know. Bertrille was situated much as I was, having only distant relatives, who used to be farmers in the neighborhood of Saint-Orse, but who, during the ten years since she had lost sight of them, had perhaps changed farms five or six times. So we were alone, before the mayor of Fossemagne and at the church, and the first comers served as witnesses.

There are places in our part of the country where they offer *tourin*, or onion-soup, to the newly-married on the threshold of the church as they come out. But we were poor and without friends, and no one offered this courtesy.

So, when we had come out of the church, and I had hastily thanked the curé, I borrowed a mule and cart from a man whom I knew in the town because I had done him some slight service, and I went off with my wife to get her bit of furniture from Bars.

When I had loaded everything on the cart—not a long operation—we went back to Ages over the bad forest roads. When she entered the house and saw the table of planks nailed on stakes and the sort of big box in which I used to sleep on bracken, my wife looked at me with her eyes full of pity.

“You were none too well off here, my Jacquou.”

“Bah!” I answered, “I slept just the same.”

After I had unloaded everything and set up the bedstead, I went off to take back the mule and cart to the man at Fossemagne, while my wife set a pot on the fire with a fowl which she had already prepared.

When I came back three hours later, bringing a half pint of wine that I had bought at the inn, my wife had finished arranging everything as well as possible. It was not really very much to have a bed and a table in this hut; but to me it seemed as if everything were completely changed.

The bed with its oakum sheets had replaced my box in the corner, and in the middle, instead of the

nailed boards, was the table. The fire shone brightly on the black hearth, and from the pot there escaped in jets a savory vapor. On a towel of gray linen which covered the end of the table were placed a loaf of bread and two plates of brown earthenware. And my wife came and went, rinsing two greenish goblets, wiping two spoons, tasting the soup, adding salt, cutting the bread in the soup-dish, and, in short, by her mere presence, giving life to this miserable dwelling that had formerly been sad and solitary.

Then with my heart full of joy, I seized her as she passed close to me and kissed her so heartily that I made her blush.

When everything was ready, and night had come, she lighted the lamp, and poured the soup over the bread. Then when we had sat down, she served it; and this, with the chicken which had an egg stuffing, was our whole wedding feast. All the same, it lasted a long time, for we talked more than we ate, recalling our memories.

"Who would have thought we should be married, my Bertrille, when we came back from the celebration of Saint-Rémy!"

"Then," she answered, "there were two poor creatures between us who are no longer on earth. . . ."

While we talked and ate, my dog sat by us, watching us and sweeping the ground with his tail, apparently well pleased with the change that had taken place in the house.

"Come, old fellow," I said, throwing him the bones,

"feast yourself. We sha'n't have things like this every evening."

Bertrille smiled a little.

"Poverty can be better endured together, when we love each other; you said so yourself, Jacquou!"

"And it is indeed the truth, Bertrille; he who is contented is rich, and this evening we are rich, are we not?" And then I added, half jestingly, "We shall be even richer when there are some small children."

"Yes, my Jacquou," she answered, quite simply.

"Thanks to God's help," I went on, pouring out two fingers of wine, "we are both strong and courageous. I have faith that we shall be able to draw good from the miseries of life. To your health, my Bertrille!"

"To yours, my Jacquou!"

And when we had touched glasses and drunk for a last time, we went towards the hearth, for it was cold, and continued to talk.

We stayed there a long time. The dog, well fed, was sleeping, curled up in a corner of the hearth; and in the other we sat close together on the stump, my wife leaning her head on my breast and I with my arm about her. Outside, the winter wind was blowing keen; sometimes it rushed down the chimney, driving back the smoke, and making the lantern flicker where it hung on a nail. I felt against my side the heavy, regular heartbeats of my wife, and I was happy. My thoughts were traveling far on into the future into which we were both entering, and while I dreamed of

it, I watched mechanically the branches which were being slowly consumed and turned into embers revived by the air from outdoors.

The embers became covered with white ashes, and the fire went out little by little. All at once a strong gust blew the ashes from the hearth and put out the light.

"We cannot stay here any longer," I said to my wife, kissing her in the shadow.

CHAPTER IX

My story is drawing to a close. The sixty years that follow can be briefly told. They contain only ordinary events.

The Sunday after our marriage, without waiting any longer, I went off with my Bertrille to Fanlac, to pay our respects to the Chevalier de Galibert and his sister. Although I had sent them word that I was to be married, I did not consider that enough. But when we reached there, the widow of Séguin the weaver told us that Mlle. Hermine had died the year before on Saint Martin's Day. As for her brother, he was still there but much aged and saddened by the death of his sister. We found him in the dining-room before a big fire of logs, warming his legs, which were afflicted with pains that sometimes made him grit his teeth. But that did not prevent him from giving us a hearty greeting and entertaining us with some old sayings, although in my opinion they were not as much to the point as they had formerly been.

"Ah, there you are, Master Jacques," he said, in response to my salutation, "and this is your wife, I suppose?"

"Yes, indeed, M. le Chevalier."

"Then you are of the religion of St. Joseph, four sabots under the bed?"

We laughed a little, and he continued:

"Since you have begun housekeeping, Jacquou, you must remember that a man must behave himself as 'the companion of his wife and the master of his horse. . . .' Everything should be shared between you, sorrow and happiness, as well as the ordinary things of life, as the old familiar saying shows:

" 'To drink, eat and sleep together—
That, it seems to me, is marriage.' "

Then the Chevalier asked me where I was now living and what I was doing.

When I had told him, he said:

"That's nothing very great, but you're both young; you'll pull through.

" 'Poverty is no sin;
He's rich enough who owes nothing.' "

Having flung off these two sayings, one after the other, the Chevalier rose, leaning on the arms of his chair, and then, helping himself with his cane, he went over to the kitchen and called:

"Hola! Seconde!"

The maid who was in the court came in.

"You're to give these two young people lunch, you understand?"

"Yes, M. le Chevalier."

And turning to me, by way of explanation:

"Poor Toinette died six months before my sister."

He stood pensive a moment and added:

"One can find a remedy for everything but death."

And at that he sat down again near the fire, while *Seconde* cut the bread for the soup. When the soup had been poured out, while we were eating, the *Chevalier* talked to me of the past, and took pleasure in recalling his memories. He spoke for a long time about the *Curé Bonal*, and ended by saying:

"He was both a man and a priest, he was! So the Pharisees persecuted him."

Then among other things he asked me what had become of the *Nansacs*. When I told him that they had all disappeared except the youngest daughter who had stayed behind with her foster-mother, he said:

"She'll manage very well. 'A beautiful girl and an old dress always find someone to hook them up.'"

Towards two o'clock, as we were about to leave, the *Chevalier* said to me:

"You know, *Jacquou*, that if you are ever in a hole where you need help, you must let me know."

"Many thanks, *M. le Chevalier*, for that offer, and many thanks a thousand times over for all your past kindness, for which I shall be grateful to you as long as there is life in my body. It is not very probable that such a thing should happen—I am too unimportant for that; but if on my side I could be of use to you in any way whatever, I would do what I could with right good will."

"Thanks, my *Jacquou*, I shall not refuse. 'One

has often need of someone smaller than oneself! Come, good-bye, my children!"

"Good evening, M. le Chevalier, and the best of health from both of us!"

"What a fine man!" said my wife, as we went away, "and how amusing he is with his jokes and his proverbs!"

"But if you had only known his sister! She was a saint, she was. Poor lady, who made me my first shirts when I came to Fanlac! . . . I shall never be consoled for not having been at her burial."

A short time after my marriage, I decided that working here and there by the day, earning a few sous, being often idle and reduced to eking out my living with all sorts of odd jobs, was too uncertain and unprofitable, now that I had a house of my own, and that it would be better to take up some trade, or some sort of work where what small capacity I had could serve me better than the rôle of a day laborer.

I only half agreed with the proverb which the Chevalier would sometimes repeat laughingly:

"He who believes his wife or his curé
Is in danger of being damned."

I talked it over with Bertrille, who was quite of my opinion.

Thereupon, having heard that Jean's nephew was looking for someone to help him, I went to find him, and we came to an agreement. Thus I became a charcoal-burner.

When one has good sense and the desire to learn, things move quickly. So my apprenticeship was not long. I must say also that the trade is not one in which you need a very skilled hand. It is experience above everything that makes a good charcoal-burner, combined with a certain knack which, with a little intelligence, one acquires easily.

Moreover, you must not think that the trade is as disagreeable as it is black; you must not trust appearances. Many people would doubtless prefer the trade of a baker, as being cleaner than that of a charcoal-burner; but, for all that, what a difference there is between them! To be shut up in a bakehouse where it is as hot as hell, to sweat and whine all night, bent over the kneading-trough, to burn your face when you put things into the oven, to go to bed when other people are getting up,—that is a fine trade for you! A charcoal-burner's life for me!

This trade suited me well, because one is alone in the woods and lives there in peace, only rarely having to do with other people. There are some who need the society of others, who wish to mingle with the crowd, who need neighbors, need the exchange of pleasantries or idle talk; not I. And it seems to me a misfortune not to know how to live alone. When men are gathered together they are worth less than each by himself. This is true morally as well as physically; great gatherings of human beings are unhealthy for the mind and the heart as well as the body. It is in vain that city folk boast of some

advantage, in this, that, or the other respect; the poor things can spit no further than we can. Also, when I hear them praising the life of the city, it seems to me that they are winding up tripe on a reel of maple-wood.

Well, then, to return. Nothing was more pleasant to me than to work like this in the open air and sunshine, and watch the furnaces by starlight. It is not a work that keeps one from thinking; on the contrary, one has plenty of time for it, and subjects for thought are not lacking. How many times at night, lifting my head and seeing those millions of suns lost in immeasurable depths, and burning against the dark blue of the sky, have I fallen into a reverie! How many times have I admired those stars that move aloft, exact as a well-regulated clock, passing their ordained points in space. By dint of observing them, I ended by knowing the time from their position as well as if I had had a watch. I know nothing more beautiful than to see the evening star rise slowly from the horizon. Often, alone in the midst of the woods, I have followed its superb ascension into the firmament, telling myself that perhaps on that star some charcoal-burner, watching his ovens in some sort of Barade forest, was contemplating the earth, as I, on the earth, contemplated his planet.

You will say perhaps: "All that is very fine in good weather; but when it rained? . . . "

Well, when it rained, I took shelter in the hut; and then I had a good, tough skin that protected me from

the wet. A little water,—that amounts to nothing, and now and then I don't object to it.

To continue. I liked also to observe what was going on about me, to learn the ways and habits of the animals and the birds. I spied upon the hedgehog chasing snakes; the squirrel on his hunt for beech-nuts; the fox yelping on the track of a hare; the weasel and the marten surprising the brooding hen in the nest; the prowling wolves coming out of their lairs at the hour when the stars rise, and returning in the morning after having eaten some dog that had stayed outside a village. Sometimes I passed long intervals watching the tricks of some animal that did not see me.

One very curious thing is to see the birds build their nests. Their skill in weaving the moss, linen, grass, horse-hair is astonishing, as is the rapidity with which they finish their work. I knew all the nests:—that of the lark which on the ground in the imprint of an ox's hoof, and which conceals builds its nest so well that often the reaper passes over it without seeing it; that of the oriole, suspended between the two branches of a forked limb; that of the wren, built in the form of a ball, with a little hole for entrance; that of the tomtit, in which fifteen to eighteen little ones are pressed one against the other in the hole of a chestnut tree; that of the turtle-dove, which is made of nothing more than some crossed twigs. Seeing only an egg, I could tell infallibly of what bird it was. There are many species, however, in our region.

I should have liked to know also the names of the

great number of plants which abound in our countryside; I mean, their French names, for to my great surprise the majority have no name in patois. But if I did not know the name of all, I knew them, many at least, by their form, the time of their flowering, and then by their useful and injurious qualities, as, for example,—the plant for wounds, or plantain; the plant for cats, which makes them mad; the plant for corns; the devil's plant, for conjuring; the plant for chilblains; the plant for sneezing; the plant to cure fevers; the plant for madmen; the plant which cures the scab; the plant for beggars, or clematis; the plant for drunkards, *ivraie* in French, *virajo* in patois; the plant for lepers; the plant for wolves, which is a poison; the plant to heal scrofula; the sorcerers' plant, which is mandrake; the milk-plant for nursing mothers who need it; Saint-Fiacre's plant, or mullein; the plant to kill lice; the plant to drive away fleas; the plant for whitlow; Saint-Roch's plant, which they attach to the yoke, the day of the blessing of the animals; the plant for ringworm, or burdock; the plant for warts; finally, to make an end of this list, the five plants of Saint John, of which they make crosses nailed on the doors of stables; all, plants which must not be forgotten when one wishes to succeed in some important affair.

Surely no one is going to tell me that my life in the woods was not freer, healthier and more intelligent, a hundred times, than that of the people of my station in life in the towns, where they have only a few years

to live and diseases unknown among us, and they cannot even distinguish rye from oats. Even if somebody did tell me so, I would not believe it at all.

One can well imagine that being always outdoors and in the woods, I took care not to forget my hunting. And indeed, I always loved it passionately; my gun was always in the hut, loaded, all ready. Only, it need not be thought that when you are at work, and you have the furnaces burning, you can shoot your gun as often as you like; you can only do so when you get a chance.

All the same, I sometimes had strokes of luck, as when I carried off a whole brood of young wolves in the forest, near Cros-de-Mortier. My wife took them to Périgueux in a hamper, as large as puppies three weeks old; and they gave her the bounty, which served us well in fixing up our hut, and adding a room to it.

After that, I killed a number of badgers, as I lay in wait for them or was out hunting, and three other wolves, in the following way. At the proper season, which is winter, I would call the wolves by howling into my sabot, imitating an excited she-wolf. My imitation was so good that one night four fine wolves came to the spot where I was hidden and howled in reply. Soon they began to encircle each other, growling like dogs, jealous, their hair bristling. I greeted them all with a gunshot which stretched one of them out dead.

Curious readers will perhaps say: "You were just

speaking of your wife. What did she do while you were in the woods making charcoal?"

Well, as for me, I was never one of those molly-coddles who cannot leave their wife's skirts. I certainly loved her dearly, but you do not have to pet a person constantly to show your affection; and when it was necessary to separate, we did so without making a to-do about it. But it is true, too, that I was not like the *chabretaires*, or village fiddlers, who find no house so bad as their own, accustomed as they are to be feasted wherever they go. On the contrary, I always came back to my home with pleasure.

But at first, while I was busy turning into charcoal some wood cut in the neighborhood of Lac-Viel, my wife would come out to me and stay two or three days; then she would go back to Ages to see if anything had been disturbed, and would come back again later, bringing some bread, or whatever else I needed. During the day she would help me set up a furnace, or would sit turning the spindle after it was lighted. Then she would make the soup and stir the fire under the pot which hung from three stakes propped together at the top. When evening came, we would have supper by firelight, and go to sleep in the cabin, lying on fern and sheepskins. Sometimes I had to get up to see to the furnaces, but I let my wife sleep on peacefully, guarded by the dog who slept across the doorway. I can't help saying once more that it was a fine life, healthy, free and vigorous.

This was how we lived when we were first married. But when, nine months later, my wife had a boy, she brought him with her, and after he had nursed to his heart's content, she would put him to sleep in the cabin, where he slept his fill. As long as there was only one, that did very well, but when the second came, he had to be told to go! My wife had to stay at Ages, and care for the latest arrival, while the elder began to walk, clinging to her skirts; and poor Jacquou was obliged to stay alone in the middle of the woods and cook his soup himself. As time passed, every two, or rather two and a half years, there would be another child in the house, so that my wife could not think of leaving it until the oldest was seven or eight years old and could watch the smaller ones.

For that matter, I did not always work in the neighborhood, or even in the Barade forest, although that was my proper quarter. Sometimes I was far away in the forest of Vergt, or in that of Masnègre, between Valojoux and Tamniers; sometimes even up at Besède, near Belvès, and in the forest of Born I undertook to make charcoal, chiefly for the forges. Thus, of necessity, we acquired the habit, my wife and I, of being separated at times; but that did not prevent us from loving each other as much as before. If I dared, I would even say that these little absences strengthened our affection, for affection languishes when people never leave each other.

Our situation was scarcely changed since we went

to housekeeping. It was already a long time since Jean's nephew had sold his house at Maurezies and his piece of land, and had gone over near Salignac, so that I was the only charcoal-maker in the district. I had hired a boy, for the work required it; but this does not mean that we were rich. For we needed bread, and a good deal of it, for all these children, who had a big appetite; and then there were clothes! Although up to the age of twenty they went bare-headed and barefoot, except when in winter they wore sabots, they had to have at every season shirts and trousers, and jackets when it was cold. It is true that as they grew up their clothes passed to the one who came next in age, so that when they reached the last one, there were nothing but patched rags left, though these were always clean. What gave my wife the most trouble was the linen to make the shirts and the sheets. In winter she sat up late and spun as much as she could, putting dry prunes in her mouth to make saliva. The children's maintenance and nourishment all mounted up then, without counting our being obliged to buy many things: a cabinet to arrange the clothes in, a bread-pan, and another bed for all the children; they lay in this, some lengthwise, others across, at the head and at the foot.

When we presented them one after the other for baptism, as fast as they came, the good old curé of Fossemagne would say, laughing:

"Ah! Ah! I've been lucky, I had a good hand!"

And as for the fee, it was always the same: nothing.

But occasionally, my wife took or sent him a hare or a couple of wood-pigeons at the migrating season, a fine basket of mushrooms, or some other little gift like that to show our gratitude.

Although we were not rich, we were happier and more contented than if we had had a hundred thousand francs. I no longer thought of anything but my wife, my children and my work. And in thinking of my work, I was always thinking of my family, since I was working to support them. I had not forgotten the past, but it was no longer always before my mind, occupied as it was with the affairs of the present.

If some circumstance, however, came to remind me of it, my memory reawoke vividly and carried me back to the unhappy days of my childhood and my youth. When I remembered that rascality of the Count, I still felt the hatred growling in me, like a dog that one cannot appease. When I passed the places where I had met Galiote, I recalled the fever of love which burned in me then, and I had some difficulty, sober-minded as I was now, in the fullness of my affection for my wife, in understanding my madness of those days. About the time of the birth of our eldest child, she had left the country, for her brother and her sisters, being in need of money, had wished to sell the farm where she lived. Where had she gone? Had she ended by going to the bad like

her sisters? I never knew; it is possible, but I prefer to think that she did not, for she was worth more than the others.

As for the Count, they say in the countryside that, after having lived for a long time on charity, so to speak, licking the platter in the châteaux roundabout, or at the house of Dom Enjalbert, and enduring wherever he went the contempt of his poverty, he had taken refuge at Paris with his eldest daughter, who was a hard drinker, and finally died in the poor-house.

It was just as the Chevalier had said:

“One hundred years a banner, one hundred years a barrow! . . . ”

A few years after our marriage, I was talking with my wife about the four terrible days when I had lain in the oubliette of l’Herm, and although it was not the first time, she clasped her hands with exclamations of pity, as she always did on hearing this tale. She wished to see the very spot, and one Sunday we walked over to l’Herm.

When we had arrived in front of these ruins, inhabited now only by owls and bats, I felt a stir of pride on seeing the result of my work, and on thinking that I, poor and despised as I was, had overcome the Comte de Nansac, in spite of his being powerful and well-guarded. When my wife saw that stone trap-door in the pavement of the prison, that black hole through which they had lowered me into the dark-

ness of the dungeon, she gave a quiver of pain, and recoiled in horror.

"Oh, my poor husband! How were you able to live four days and four nights down there?"

As I came out of the enclosure of the château, I found the boy who had kept watch on the night of the fire. He was now married in the village, and he made us come in and drink a glass with him. As we clinked our glasses, we spoke of that night when we had done justice to that family of wolves, and then he said to me:

"I don't understand how the people of this region were able to endure all these miseries so long! Devil take me, if I don't believe that, without you, we would still be under the fist of those brigands!"

"In the end, doubtless somebody would have rid the country of them," I replied.

"Perhaps; but while they waited, you did it! And you will bear the marks of it to your death," he added, looking at the scars of the bullets in my cheeks.

And having drunk a final glass, I returned to Ages with my wife.

Another time, as we went together to the fair on the 25th of January at Rouffignac, to buy a little pig, I showed her the tile-works where I had passed such terrible moments at the time of my mother's death. But it had been years since that time, and the framework and the tiling had fallen in, dragging down the mud-walls, so that the house was nothing but a heap of

ruins, a chaos of earth and stones and broken tiles, covered with briars and wild grasses, from which projected half-rotten wood, like the bones of some huge animal buried under the debris.

And there I told her of the horrible anguish I had experienced when, as a young boy, I saw my distracted mother die in all the agonies of despair.

"Poor thing!" she said, "you were not any too happy in those early years."

"No; but now, please God, except for unforeseen accidents, the evil days are over."

She said nothing, and we continued on our way.

On my last visit to Fanlac with my wife, I had urged old Cariol to let me know if anything was the matter with the Chevalier. As I have already said, it had given me much regret, and even genuine grief, not to have been present at the burial of the good Mlle. Hermine. Although it was not my fault, yet it seemed to me that I had been wanting in my duty, and I did not wish to repeat the offense. One morning a boy arrived at Ages, sent by Cariol to bring us the news that the Chevalier was dead. At this time we already had several children; so my wife sent the oldest, who was big enough, to tell me the news, over by Fagnac where I was. I left my workman with the furnaces, and hastened back to the house, where, having put on my best clothes, I departed for Fanlac, and arrived just in time for the burial.

Here is what it means to be a good man! The whole parish was there: old and young, men and women

and little children, and, along with them, many of the nobles and gentlefolk of Montignac and the neighborhood. All the men were anxious to assist in carrying the body to the cemetery, or at least to touch the coffin. The curé was no longer the one who had replaced Bonal; the people had hated him so bitterly that he had been obliged to leave, as I have said. His successor, whom they had sent two years later, preached a fine sermon over the Chevalier's tomb, and praised him as he deserved. When he announced that in his will the dead man had given all his property to the poor of the parish, there was a long murmur of blessings from them all, and the good women wiped their eyes. Unfortunately it was not a fortune that he left, the good man; for there remained scarcely twenty-five or twenty-six thousand francs in actual value, as it appeared, the estate being heavily mortgaged. It was not because of dissipation or poor management that the Chevalier and his sister had used up their property; it was through generosity. He had never known how to refuse a hundred écus in cash to a man in need; and, trusting as a child, he had often invested his money badly, or neglected to take the necessary precautions. It was the same with the poor; the brother and sister had always given without calculation. So they ate up their property, little by little, and for several years had lived more on their principal than on their interest. As for that, even the fortunes of those who pay close attention to them inevitably shrink, unless they are renewed from

some source,—industry, marriage or inheritance. A small country nobleman like the Chevalier who, at the beginning of the century was rich, with an income of two thousand écus, found himself in straits thirty years later, and would be poor to-day. If, along with that, there fell several bad seasons, or extensive repairs had to be made, he would have to borrow; the debts rolled up like a snowball, and he would be totally ruined.

Some time after the burial of the Chevalier, I was coming back from Ages, and was going to look at a cutting on the slope of La Bossenie, when on the path, at a distance of a hundred paces, I saw coming towards me an old woman in rags, all bent over, with a stick in her hand and a wallet on her back. As I approached, I said to myself: "Who the devil is this old woman?" And all of a sudden, although she was so much altered, thin as a pickax, with pointed nose and red eyes, I recognized Mathive, and my hatred for this rascal of a woman suddenly revived. On reaching me, she raised her head a little, and recognizing me too, she stopped.

"O Jacquou," she said, "you see I'm very miserable!"

"So much the better! You will never be sufficiently so to suit me!"

"Guilhem has squandered all my property," she continued, wiping her eyes, "and now I am begging my bread. . . ."

"Old scamp! Since the death of poor Lina, I have wanted to see you dying in a ditch with your wallet

on your back! You are on the road there; I have no pity for you!"

And I went on.

I was certainly wrong not to remember, on this occasion, the lessons of the Curé Bonal, who had never ceased to preach pity. But the thought that this miserable mother had made her own daughter suffer so much, and had finally, one might say, killed that sweetest and best of beings, revolted me and made me insane with anger. Merciful we undoubtedly ought to be, but it is also necessary to point out that if one is too lax in pardoning, one encourages the wicked. Those in whom conscience is dead require that the conscience of others should recall to them their faults and crimes. Then, too, the horror which the wicked inspire is a just punishment for them, and serves as a warning to those who are tempted to imitate them. What I had wished for took place: one winter morning they found Mathive dead on the road between Martillat and Prisse, half eaten by the wolves.

Since I have just mentioned this infamous Guilhem, I will add concerning him that shortly after the death of Mathive, he was condemned to the galleys for life. One evening, after the fair at Ladouze, he had beaten down and robbed a pig merchant of Thenon, on the high road at Croix-de-Ruchard. Such was his inevitable end.

All these things are now far away. I am at this time ninety years old; and these events, although a

little obscured by the mist of the past, return sometimes to my memory. Like all old people, I love to tell old tales, and I do it at too great length undoubtedly, since they are not always cheerful. In the village of l'Herm, however, where I now live, the people do not find it so; but that is because, during the long winter evenings, they are used to hearing interminable stories. Although I tell them everything in great detail, just as I remember it, there are some among them who find that I do not explain myself sufficiently. They wish to know what the hair of my dog was like, and the age of our dead cat.

I have had thirteen children, male and female. People say that this number thirteen brings bad luck; but as for me, I have never observed it. Only one of them died, which is something rare and almost extraordinary. But, born robust and brought up in the midst of the woods in a wholesome region, they were protected from those diseases which run through the cities and the towns, where people are too much crowded together. If I say that I have had so many children, it is not in order to boast; that is nothing, for men do not suffer in having them: it is the poor women who have all the pain, and also the trouble of bringing them up. My wife was twenty years old when we were married, and from that time up to nearly fifty, she never ceased to have a child in her arms, which she put on the ground when the next arrived. I say frankly that towards the end I lost count a little; for one carnival evening, while we were having supper,

I amused myself by counting them, and found there were only eleven.

"And Jeanette, who is down there, married, at Moustier," said my wife, "is she a bastard?"

"On my word! I never thought of her; but that still makes only twelve?"

Then she went to take the last little one from the bed, and presented him to me:

"And this one,—don't you know him?"

"Ah, the poor little thing! I forgot him."

And I took the little baby, who smiled at me, kissed him, and made him dance a little in the air: after this, I gave him a little drop of wine in my glass to taste.

During this talk, the other children, who were around the table, were laughing to see that their father could not recognize his thirteen children any more.

At that time some of the boys and girls were married, and others had left to work away from home; so that it was not surprising that one of them should be forgotten. Certainly not! Only, my wife said that the carnival was to blame.

It is true enough that even if the man has not the trouble of bearing and bringing up the children, he has to struggle to nourish and support them; and this is no small matter, especially when there are so many of them. Thanks to God, however, I did not let them want for bread, although it meant hard drudgery. But what of it! That's what we are made for; I don't complain.

You can imagine that with this troop of children

I was not able to become rich. In my whole life I have never been fifty écus ahead; but I have been content, all the same, provided that from day to day there was enough in our house to buy a sack of wheat. So the inheritance I shall leave will not be large: all together it is the Ages house with three acres of land about it,—the whole having been bought for forty pistoles, and a gold louis thrown in (for the lady's breast-pin), and paid little by little in installments of fifty francs on Saint John's Day and at Christmas.

So you see I have not been rich in goods, but only in children; and when I think of it, I find that I have received the better share. I prefer to leave behind me many children rather than a great deal of land or money. You will tell me that when I am dead it will be all the same to me. True enough! But while I wait, I am rejoiced now to see swarming about me all these grandchildren and great-grandchildren who have sprung from me. As to this score, I have entirely lost the count, or, to speak more accurately, I have never known it. Besides, I must confess, there is in all this matter something that I estimate very highly,—that is, the satisfaction of having done my duty as a man and a citizen. Unfortunately, that is an affair about which people scarcely think nowadays. I have heard it said that formerly there were peoples among whom the man who had no children was despised, and the citizen who had the most was most highly valued. To-day, such a man would be called an imbecile. People, especially

the well-to-do, prefer to have only one child and to make him rich. It is known well enough, however, that the children of the rich are less worthy. It is a bad situation to enter life with everything you desire; it ruins all initiative and all resource, or prevents you from acquiring them. So one sees the rich families degenerate. There are doubtless exceptions, but they are rare.

But I loiter on my way; it is time to finish. It is now ten years since my poor wife died, and since that time, I have left the Ages house to my eldest son, who will make arrangements with his brothers and sisters; and I have come to live at l'Herm, with another of my sons. That was a heavy blow, the separation from her with whom I had lived so long, without an hour of discord; for she was a good woman, more devoted and valiant than one can say. But the good as well as the wicked are subject to death.

After that, another misfortune happened to me, only two years ago at Assumption-tide, when I became blind almost at a stroke. I, who still went to take care of the goat along the roads, am no longer good for anything. I have to take the hand of my Nore or my little Charlotte, who lead me to a seat in a good spot sheltered from the wind, where I warm myself in the winter sun. Otherwise, my head is sound, and my legs are good. When my granddaughter keeps me company, I have enough to do to answer her, for she questions me incessantly about this or that, as is the habit, you know, of little children who wish to

know everything. But sometimes she leaves me and goes to amuse herself with the other children of the village, and then I stay alone, unless our nearest neighbor, old Peyronne, comes to sit with me. But we do not hold much conversation, for she is deaf as a pot.

When I am all alone in the sun, or perhaps in the summer in the shade of an old nut-tree that stands at the approach to the château moat, I ponder over my memories and sound my conscience. I think of all that I have done,—of the burning of the forest and the château; and, after turning and revolving things in all their aspects, after examining closely all the circumstances, I find myself excusable, just as did those brave gentlemen of the jury. My only regret is the Count's two dogs that I got strangled in my snares; for the poor beasts were not to blame. But as for the rest, I returned war for war, and I only defended myself and my people and all the rest of us, against the odious misdeeds and criminal wickedness of the Comte de Nansac. So I have no remorse.

In the village and everywhere, they are doubtless of the same opinion, for the people are fond of me and respect me as the one who delivered them from an insupportable tyranny. Without intending it, I did a good turn to the countryside in another way; for when the Count's estate was put up for sale at the tribunal, the speculators bought it up to sell it again in small holdings. Then the people of l'Herm, of Prisse, and the other villages roundabout, looked into their old stockings, locked up in their drawers,

and acquired fields, meadows, woods, vineyards, at their convenience, paying part down and part in installments. This has altered the countryside entirely. For, at l'Herm and at Prisse, there were formerly only two or three miserable peasant proprietors. All the rest were small farmers and day-workers,—all living wretchedly, without freedom, never sure of a morrow which depended on the evil caprices of the Count or the rascality of Laborie and the others. The sons and grandsons of these poor people, who scarcely dared so much as to raise their heads, so to speak, who were as timid as weasels, so much had this cursed family oppressed them, are now good peasants, masters of their own land, fearing nothing and conscious of being men. That is an important consequence; and from it we must conclude that the large estate is the scourge of the peasant and the ruin of the district. But there is another equally important consequence,—that in addition to ease and security and independence, the disappearance of the Count has given the people a confidence in the administration of justice. Before this, when they were abandoned by the authorities and the men of position to the vexations and cruel tyranny of this man, they said as a body: "There is no justice for the poor!" When he had gone, they began to be acquainted with it and to respect it. To-day, thanks to others than poor Jacquou, they know that it is for every man, and the one who is injured knows well how to make use of it. There are even some who make use of it too frequently, for they go to law for

nothing, about a sheep whose horns have been broken or a fowl in a garden. It is in a way our disease, as the Chevalier said:

"The Jews ruin themselves at Easter, the Moors in marriage, Christians in a lawsuit."

But at least our people, of whom I speak, are not reduced, as they formerly were, to execute justice themselves,—which is an evil thing.

Comparison of the past with the present teaches us that people revolt only in the last extremity, through an excess of misery or despair at not being able to obtain justice. So those great uprisings of peasants, so common in former days, have become more and more rare, and have finally disappeared, now that each one, however humble he is, can have recourse to the law, which protects us all. As for myself, I believe that I am the last peasant rebel of Périgord.

A long life, they say, does not diminish one's troubles. However, as one can see, my old age is happier than my youth. The people of l'Herm are almost proud of me; and when people come to visit the ruins of the château, if they ask some question or other about it, they are told:

"Old Jacquou will tell you all that; he knows better than anybody the ancient history of l'Herm and the Barade forest; for he is the oldest man in the region, and it is he that burned the château."

And then sometimes, somebody comes to question me, and, seated on a great stone, in the court full of

debris and overrun with wild grass, I relate to them my history. One of these visitors, who has come two or three times on purpose, has told me that he would put it in writing, just as I had related it to him. I don't know whether he will do it, but it's all the same to me. As I told him, I am no longer at the age when one loves to hear oneself spoken of.

Thus my life ends by flowing smoothly, at peace with myself, loved by my children, esteemed by my neighbors, possessing the good will of everyone. And, in full serenity of mind, the last survivor of all those of my time, surfeited with days, I remain alone in the night, like the lantern of the dead in the cemetery of Atur, and await death.

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